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‘Message in a Mobile’

Mixed-Messages, Tales of Missing and Mobile Communities at the University of Khartoum

Siri Lamoureaux

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risaala fi jawaal

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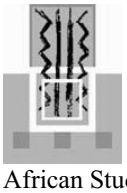

African Studies Centre
P.O. Box 9555
2300 RB Leiden
The Netherlands
asc@asc.leidenuniv.nl
http//:asc.leidenuniv.nl

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(0) روحى يا رساله لعزيز وزوريهو وان لقيته نائم ارجوك لا تزعجيهو وان مل صبرك من الانتظار صحيه قولى ليه صاحب الرساله بعزك وان ما جاوبك خليهو بفكر لا تحرجيهو

ruuHii ya risaala l-'aziz wa zuuriihuu wa in ligiithu naa'im arjuuk la taz 'ajiihu wa in mella Sabrik min al-intizaar SaHiihu guuli leehu Sahib al-risaala bi'izik wa in ma jaawabik khalliihu yafakir la taHrjiihuu

'Go message to the kind one and visit him and if you find him sleeping please don't bother him and if you lose patience from waiting wake him up and tell him the message owner appreciates you and if he does not reply you let him think don't embarrass him'

This is one of my favourite text messages in the corpus that I collected. It is personified, meaning it takes on human qualities, and would better represent me than a few written words. I would like to think it could carry me to all those that I would like to thank personally and show my appreciation to for their support, kindness, help, interest, guidance, tolerance or whatever role was taken.

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1

Introduction

(1) منكم تستحى الحروف وتضعف العبارات وتبقوا انتم دوما بشرف الغايب الحاضر.

minkum tistaHii al-Huruuf wa taDH'af al-'ibaaraat wa tabquu antum dawman bi-sharaf al-ghaaib al-HaaDHir

'While the letter is timid and may weaken the phrase, you are forever kept in absent but present honor'

This Arabic poem, which appeared in a text message[1] sent to one of my students at the University of Khartoum in Sudan, carries an illocutionary force, by performing the meaning expressed in the message content itself. It was explained to mean that a person may be absent with his body, the message,[2] while not as good as the person, brings the absent person present with his soul. The capacity of the mobile phone to bring the "absent-present" (Gergen 2002), where physical presence is dissociated from mental presence, as this poem performs, is having a profound affect on people's lives by bridging physical barriers, but also redefining taken-for-granted notions of place and belonging in the world.

Mobile phones have been praised for "liberat(ing) individuals from the constraints of their settings" (Katz & Aakhus 2002) to facilitate being in multiple locations at one time. This can mean, for work situations, multitasking, or in emergencies, calling the police, or, in simple everyday relations between family and friends, a heightened and flexible means for staying in touch. Even such mundane changes seem to have oppositional effects: increased independence on the one hand, and increased sense of belonging or contact on the other. This thesis is an exploration of this capacity of the mobile phone: its simultaneous

[1] Data will be presented in three lines: The first being an exact copy of the text-message, the second, a Latin alphabet transliteration of the Arabic script (see Appendix 1 for transcription conventions), the third line an English translation.

[2] Here *al-Huruuf* 'the letter (alphabetic)'.

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ability to allow people to individuate themselves with respect to their designated social and/or physical "place" and to bring people together in new ways, create new social space and bring the absent-present to the University of Khartoum, which, quite symbolically, resides in a lush garden in downtown Khartoum, near the confluence of the Blue and White Niles at the geographic center of Northern Sudan.

Northern Sudan is a fascinating place, in large part defined by its large distances, history of mobility and the necessity of long-distance communication (de Bruijn & Brinkman 2008) along the Nile on the one hand and between the Nile Valley and the peripheral areas which radiate out from the Nile. Its strength as a cultural unity, in large part comes from its long history as an Islamic region, in spite of the breadth of ethnic and racial diversity in its population. Such a virtual unity, based on common faith, the *umma* 'Islamic community', is reflected in the urban landscape of Khartoum, inhabiting public space, where the minarets of mosques emerge from the red dust as the tallest structures above the city. However, the new pinnacles of cellular towers are now emerging alongside the minarets, changing the landscape of Khartoum. They are iconic with their shape as well, as a means to transcend human capacities, the errors and awkwardness of physical limitations. Like earlier communication technologies in Sudan, e.g. steamers on the Nile or the telegraph, their influence is not only practical, but a means for exchanging ideas, emotions, cultural practices, connecting people and allowing for shared experiences, as well as being a symbol of modernity, independance and progress.

On the ground, Khartoum, like other African cities, is a jumble of features and contradictions: you may take a rickshaw imported from India, order a chocolate milkshake from an Ethiopian waiter, you might sit next to a women in a black face-covering *niqaab*, or one from the South, permitted to wear short sleeves and no head covering; you'll see Qaddafi's new egg-shaped high rise hotel looming above the poverty-stricken urban sprawl, and looking for authentic Sudanese crafts in the old Sudanese market, *souk Omdurman*, you'll find most everything imported from China. Such coexistences characterize city life, where people exist at multiple levels and interact face-to-face with people and objects outside of their known or designated relations. Interactions via the telephone, in contrast, are commonly thought of as private and personal. They are meant to put specific people in contact when face-to-face interaction is not possible. While the students at the University of Khartoum migrate from all directions, near and far to this campus by the Nile, they nonetheless can maintain a network of relations with their respective homes, their families in Greater Khartoum as well as in rural areas, their friends sitting across the same lecture hall as easily as with a friend gone to Egypt for studies, with cousins in Saudi Arabia or England or those on

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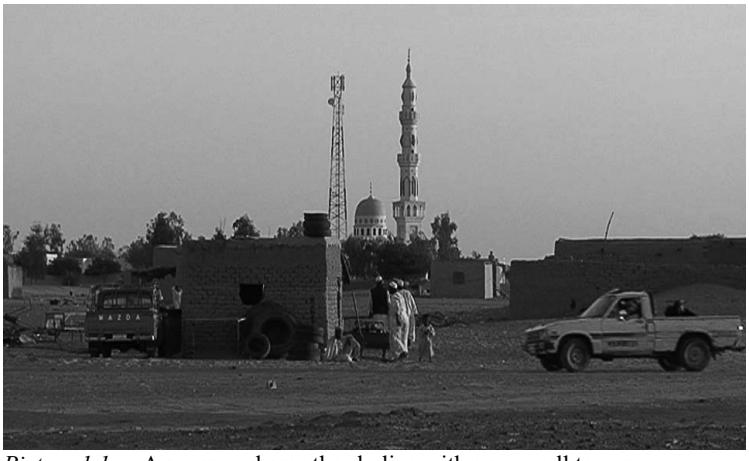
holiday in Gedaraf or in Malaysia. These connections, while at times a clear continuity of physical-life interactions, nonetheless seem to exist "above the fray", outside of the disorder and chaos of urban life, simply because receiving a call or sending a message is selective choice, a part of one's private space.

However, such distinctions between public space and private space are fuzzy. The phone may be needed to call the tea lady or the credit vendor, or a generic promotional message from the service provider may be sent via text to all phone customers, cross-cutting the private and public. The mobile phone, while certainly an instrument for traveling through space, is also, at times, an instrument which furthers *social* spaces, by altering social boundaries, allowing for the emergence of new communities of interaction, those which are not bound by territory or place, public or private.



Picture 1.1 A mosque shares the skyline with a new cell tower

Mobile Africa Revisited, a research group at the African Studies Centre in Leiden, the Netherlands, conducted a preliminary study of mobile phones and social processes in Sudan in 2007 (see de Bruijn & Brinkman 2008). I followed this project to Sudan from September 2008 to February 2009, to contribute my training in linguistics to this project and to fulfill the research requirements for my Research Master's in African Studies. I hope that this work will provide a valuable contribution to a relatively understudied place and a new area of research. Due to successive regional wars in Sudan, and difficulty of access, recent academic work in the country has been largely focused on politics, and images of Sudan in the Western media have similarly been limited to wars, famines and terrorism. Post-colonially, little has been described in academic work or in popu-

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lar media (films, novels etc.) about the culture of Northern Sudan. It is my intention in this thesis to contribute to the new field of research on electronic media and social processes with respect to the specific context of urban Northern Sudanese culture. In addition, while a significant number of sociological studies have come out about mobile phones in Western contexts and Asia (see Ling 2004; Katz 2006; Katz & Aakhus 2002; Ito & Okabe 2005), research in developing contexts and Africa, where the impact of mobile telephony is immense, is just now emerging (de Bruijn *et al.* 2008b). Few studies have looked at the sociolinguistics of mobile phones with the exception of Thurlow (2003) and Ling (2005), and of these language studies, even fewer examine non-Western languages although studies are emerging (see Lexander 2007). The studies focused on language, however, do not consider such data in its social and cultural context. In turn, ethnographic studies of mobile phones do not consider linguistic data in spite of the phone being a medium for communication. Horst & Miller (2006), in a noteworthy study of social-mobile processes in Jamaica, intentionally decided not to consider linguistic data, saying that the messages were far too impoverished and brief in content to merit further analysis. As this thesis will attempt to show, language data can provide crucial insight into the social and affective functions of mobile communication, and in turn, language data must be understood as a consequence of social interactions, the combined effect of linguistic structures with the need to communicate and to express aspects of one's identity.

Mobile phones and network society

Since time immemorial, people, ideas and things have been circulating the planet, merging with opposing processes, fusing with local notions, mixing with other people, and yielding new options for identification. In the current era, such processes are commonly related to the phenomenon of "globalization". In Sudan in the past, such means of connecting were limited to the occasional camel caravan or the long migration by foot. As is well-discussed in the current era, however, electronic communication technologies (vs. pedestrian ones) are influencing whole societies in ways both more subtle and more overt. Mobile media function in this process, credited with facilitating the flow of information, connecting people to global circuits even from remote locales with poor communication infrastructures.

Recognizing the "fuzzy" effects of the mobile phone, its rapid and widespread adoption came along with a wave of enthusiastic predictions for developing societies. The text message was lauded in popular and development discourse alike for facilitating a new more open civil society, knowledge dissemination, democratic processes etc. In Africa, NGOs use programs such as Frontline SMS, which enable group texting between headquarters and field sites (Kiwanja.net

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2008), or, through their mobile phone, rural farmers are connected to city markets and can adjust their prices with up to date information. Even in terms of education, the use of SMS and ICTs in general has been suggested to positively increase literacy skills in vernacular languages in rural areas with poor education and low literacy (Onguene Essono 2004; Lexander 2007).

Castells *et al*. (2007) identified several social trends of the new "network society" which include, among others, its influence on social and political organization through "instant communities of practice". The widespread feeling of dissent, which ended in the overthrow of Estrada in the Philippines, was orchestrated by large-scale anti-Estrada text-message forwarding (Pertierra *et al.* 2002). In the recent Iranian protest against the re-election of Ahmadinejad, high-frequency texting similarly mobilized protestors. But before the Iranian government blocked websites and mobile phone networks, a short mobile video of the death of a young woman, Neda, was immediately posted on YouTube and Facebook and sent into instant circulation on protestors' phones (*The Guardian* 2009) Neda's image mobilizing a common symbol of sympathy and purpose, as well physical organization.

In academic work, many of these predictions have been supported. As Castells *et al*. (2007) observe, "communities of practice" are not limited to political movements, but can be manifested in cultural experiences, or countercultural expressions. Such events are an outcome of the increased connectivity possible across a delimited group of people. "By allowing people to transcend a variety of physical and social barriers, the telephone has led to a complex set of dispersed personal and commercial relationships" (Katz 2006: 117) and even "cross-group communication and integration" (*Ibid*: 5) hence a redefinition of how a *community* and conceptions of belonging are thought of collectively. In some cases, it can blur traditional boundaries between public and private as authority and censorship over the "public sphere" is overridden from the bottom up, like the example of Neda, above. Especially relevant for young people, is the possibility for the emergence of a new kind of collective *identity* (Castells *et al*. 2007). An example, in the sense that the phone has the capacity to create belonging among people, is the influence of mobile communication on language, sometimes called "textese" or "textspeak" (Crystal 2008) a specialized and abbreviated form of language in text-messaging.

Naturally, such predictions and observations about the unifying or connecting capacities of the phone are accompanied by contrasting, critical and even fearful ones, that the phone may be responsible for a society of dis-connected individuals. Both in the West and in Africa, in popular and scholarly discourse, the autonomy associated with new communication technologies is feared to be overturning so-called "traditional" forms of communication (Thurlow 2003) and

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social organization (de Bruijn 2008a). Mobile phones are feared by some to be creating impoverished and anti-social forms of communication, contributing to ego-centered networks and individualism (Ling 2004; Horst & Miller 2006), "the primacy of individual projects and interests over the norms of society" (Castells *et al*. 2007: 251). Many fears have arisen concerning youth culture and "textese" in particular. In the West, this includes the loss of standard grammatical forms, literacy, and face-to-face contact. In Africa new media forms have been blamed for a "loss of oral tradition" (Ugboajah 2006) and a disruption of knowledge hierarchies, where young people obtain information without needing their elders. Some suggest that mobile phones may even increase the "digital divide", by excluding those who do not have access to literacy skills or enough money to maintain one, thereby reinforcing social inequalities (Warschauer in press) rather than bridging them.

Research is currently being conducted on these questions, and some new perspectives are emerging in recent years which dissuade far-reaching predictions of social change, both exaggerated claims of a global community and predictions of an individualized society. Despite the predictions of youth-driven innovation, mobile phone use, in fact, is often an extension of existing social practices (de Bruijn *et al.* 2009). Evidence that it indeed increases connectivity, i.e. "perpetual contact" (Katz & Aakhus 2002), suggests that it does not detract from real-life relationships, but adds to them through the strengthening and extending of personal networks. Social networks offer individuals more *choice* in communication but the choice in social contact continues to be based in face-to-face networks (Castells *et al.* 2007), thereby reinforcing existing relations, not necessarily facilitating new ones. This has been observed particularly for young people (Ling & Yttri 2002; Thurlow 2003) as well as marginalized groups, migrant minorities and women (Kasesniemi & Rautiainen 2002; Pertierra 2005). Indeed, staying in touch is found to be among the most important functions. Horst & Miller (2006) found that mobile interactions in Jamaica were most often a means for staying in touch through a high volume of short calls. The practice of "beeping" or intentional "missed calls" in Africa signals a variety of meanings in different cultural contexts, some which simply mean, "I'm thinking about you". Thurlow (2003), too, observed that high-intensity texting among university students in the UK does not replace real-life interactions but parallels it, thus an extension of locally defined ways of interacting.

In the above accounts, we see a tension between claims of new or emergent social spaces versus the increased possibilities associated with existing ones. Some accounts claim the phone to be cross-cutting traditional social barriers by uniting people locally or even globally; others suggest that it works in tandem with real life relations. They are also drawing seemingly disparate conclusions:

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claiming the phone's ability to create new communities on the one hand but enhancing a highly individualized society on the other. Castells *et al*. (2007) reconcile this disparity by explaining how increased *autonomy* over communication allows individuals to selectively *identify* with "*communities* of practice" and/or "networks of choice". Such a perspective suggests that many processes are at work: both new social spaces and existing ones are defined or redefined, new forms of collectivity are possible as people negotiate new identities, but membership to a collectivity does not preclude other identities, rather it invites a flexibility of identities. Such communities do not stand in opposition to an individualized society, but rather exist through the choices of individuals, and therefore, are not necessarily grounded in a place, but nonetheless created through a shared sense of identity or belonging, a unity which puts pressure on the boundaries of social space, public and private, and the traditional guardians of such space.

Scholars have warned against technological determinism – an assumption based on modernization ideology – positing that technologies will be universally adopted and used in the way that its designers or first users predict or do. In the words of Castells *et al*. (2007: 246), "technology does not determine society: it *is* society, and can only be understood in social terms as a social practice". This perspective recognizes the *agency* that people have to effect change within certain *structural* constraints. While its electronic, digital and wireless capacities serve to "enable, enhance, and innovate" in the ways people interact, its uses for communication cannot be separated from the interests and habits of its users (*Ibid.* 2007) and an understanding of what is meant by such concepts as *community*, *autonomy* and *identity* in specific cultural settings and locally determined social boundaries.

Situating the study: Initial research question

Thus, in embarking on this research project, I carried the questions and hypotheses posed by previous research into the specific social and cultural context of Sudan. In spite of their utility in such a large country, ICTs (information and communication technologies) have been important only recently in Sudan compared with other countries in the region. The first mobile communications company was introduced in 1997 with 3000 subscribers but by 2006, 6 million people in Sudan were using mobile phones in a total population of 40 million. The mobile phone market is growing faster than internet and other communications technologies (de Bruijn & Brinkman 2008). The privatization of phone companies has made this technology accessible to a large (and growing) portion of the population, especially in urban areas but significantly in rural ones.

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Sudan is a country plagued by a failed national policy with respect to its highly complex internal make-up. In the fifty years since independence the Arabic-speaking Muslims in control of the State have managed to draw a divisive line between the dominant culture of the North and the remainder of the population through a claim of ethnic, racial and religious superiority. Having lived in Tunisia, a highly homogenous state, where all internal diversity – Berber peoples and descendants of African slaves – has been subsumed by an Arab and Muslim national identity, I was fascinated by the Sudanese context, where these issues are far from settled, having defined most all of recent conflicts.

As a linguist, I first came to Sudan interested in the effects of the new communicative possibilities of the mobile phone with respect to minority languages and group identity. Of particular interest to me, was whether it would be possible to speak of a community via mobile phone connectivity that is different from a real-life community. If so, what defines such a community? Do new identities emerge or are existing ones reinforced through this process? I was inspired by what I had read about the creative uses of non-standardized languages in electronic formats elsewhere, chat rooms and internet blogs (Warschauer *et al.* 2002; Danet & Herring 2003; Onguene Essono 2004; Palfreyman & Al Khalil 2003) a sign of vernacular language awareness and justification. I hypothesized that such a "movement" might be occurring among the people of the Nuba Mountains of Sudan, a region of startlingly complex ethnic and linguistic diversity, originally inhabited by a non-Arab and non-Muslim population. Until recently, the Nuba Peoples did not identify themselves as a collectivity. However, Nuba people, while increasingly Arabic mother-tongue speakers and converters to Islam, made a presence in the international media in the 1990s for their collective "resistance" and "survival" in the last Sudanese North-South civil war in spite of the massive displacement and fragmentation of their families. It seemed like a probable context to test the claims of theorists concerning the unifying, identifying and community-forming effects of the mobile phone. So, I began with the following research questions: *How does the language of SMS communication among Nuba university students and their immediate networks create and reflect a sense of community? Specifically, how do linguistic, technological and social factors shape the language of these students in the discursive construction of identity?*

If a Nuba collectivity was being forged in the aftermath of the civil war, language use in mobile media might both reflect and reinforce this ideological shift. As the Nuba would need to assert themselves, an intensification of interaction would be important. I wondered how the mobile phone may connect distinct Nuba groups with one another and/or displaced Nuba living in another part of Sudan or abroad with their home in the Nuba Mountains. It was hypothesized that mobile phone connectivity may transcend geographical barriers which

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separated the various Nuba groups from one another in the past, and new patterns of mobility as many families have since migrated, and unify people through increased social networking and shared patterns of expression. This new type of "Nuba community" would undermine the Government's attempts at integration and its designs over the Arab-Islamic cultural uniformity in the public sphere, in ways that were not possible before the widespread availability of electronic communication.

In composing a text message, would Nuba people use the Arabic script since it is the only official language of communication and a purported symbol of Arab-Islamic prestige and education? Or, is the SMS a possible medium for contesting the traditional alignment of the prestige language with writing technology through the writing of colloquial dialects or one of the Nuba languages? If so, which script, Latin or Arabic, would be adopted? In church-going Moro communities in the Nuba Mountains, hymns are sung in Arabic, English, Swahili, Moro and Juba Arabic, a lingua franca of South Sudan.[3] Would such linguistic diversity carry into mobile communication as well? Which language(s) would be used practically, and which for ideological reasons? Would English, as the former colonial and now globalized language be preferred, especially since English is taught in primary education in areas under Southern Sudanese control.

And what would these languages mean to the people who use them? Would the socially and economically marginal students from the Nuba Mountains embrace the technology of the mobile phone in a way which differentiated them from other Sudanese students? Would the phone enable a separate collective social identity or would it contribute to individualism and/or ongoing processes of integration? Could such experiences be understood as emergent social spaces through the new capacities of the mobile phone or extensions of existing ones? Can I posit that the mobile phone allows for the creation of some kind of collective consciousness that is distinct from a terrestrial one? In order to answer these questions, it became important to understand the relationship between new means of connectivity, language use and community, which I outline below.

New media – new communities

A "community" was previously thought of by social scientists as a socio-political bounded spatial unit. Sociolinguistic approaches recognized a "community" as being constructed through talk and social interaction, but similarly erred in limiting it to a physical entity constituted through face-to-face interactions. These approaches were being questioned by some such as Anderson (1991) theorizing

[3] Interview Philip 11/2009.

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about national identity, and became especially problematic with the introduction of electronic media, which as stated above, may transcend geographical limitations and connect people in spite of their being physically distant. Thus, an important emphasis in anthropological linguistics in recent years has been the role of media and technology in the way information circulates since redefining the idea of "community" or "speech community" (Gumperz 1968), perhaps better captured with the label "imagined community" (Anderson 1991). Anderson famously described how newspapers and TV can influence the national imaginary, a top-down model of a community where members may not all know one another but share an idea of belonging to a collectivity by way of shared linguistic practices. Using a language involves a process of conforming to the linguistic conventions and cultural practices of the dominant language in society. Media, as a technology of communication, and a carrier of language, is an important context through which a society creates and reproduces its dominant beliefs. For example, national radio in Zambia with its motto "One Zambia, one nation" is an agent of the state in sending nationalist messages (Spitulnik 1998). While this perspective moved "community" to the level of imagination and belonging, it nonetheless resides in a delimited geo-political bound region, the nation-state. Yet the natural alignment of culture and nation is also being problematized (Gupta & Ferguson 1992; Appadurai 2001), as globalization permits information flows and networking which transcend national boundaries. Different "modalities of belonging" are now possible, and it is less about being attached to a specific place but about how "people are attached and attach themselves affectively" in the world (Grossberg 1997).

In contrast to the top-down model of Anderson, where media messages are transmitted and diffused into society in a unidirectional way, bottom-up approaches such as that of social networking models (Milroy 1987; Wellman 1988) focus on dyadic connections, and interpersonal information flows among a population. This second approach is more obviously relevant for interpersonal media such as the internet and phone and may account for how some alternative "modalities of belonging" may take shape. Concerning the fixed phone, Wellman & Tindall (1993) say, "Although these disperse unbounded telephone networks provide diversified support, the networks' segmentation and moderate density hinder the widespread communication of needs and mobilization of activity," suggesting that "community", such as that described by Anderson could not be an outcome of interpersonal media such as the phone. It is based in instances of interaction and is therefore limited to one's immediate social network. They say that, "The telephone, along with the airplane and the automobile – plays an important role in strongly maintaining (…) longstanding, densely-knit ties (…)"

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within a metropolitan area, with a low awareness of "the larger global community".

We see, therefore, that mass media has technically been defined in opposition to interpersonal media in that it is intended, distributed and consumed for and by mass audiences, while for interpersonal media, communication is dyadic and limited to personal networks. However, as Spitulnik (2002b) argues, there is a category of media, termed "small media", which seem to exist between these two extremes and include such varied examples as "political graffiti, leaflets, cartoons, underground cassettes, web pages, internet listservs" as well as technologies designed for interpersonal use (faxes, video and audio cassettes, personal computers, and telephones), which are adopted for broader functions by spanning a wider public, but operating from established communication networks, thereby blurring the strict division between mass and personal media. Situating the phone within a small media framework, rather than simply an interpersonal communication tool, allows us to better understand its functions in unifying or connecting people. According to Spitulnik (2002b: 181), "Small media are powerful (…) expressive devices in the formation of group identity, and community or subcultural solidarity". They are decentralized, diverse and fragmented and open up new "communicative spaces", potentially allowing for the expression of group identity and the creation of new relationships (Katz 2006). Therefore, I consider mobile phones not only as interpersonal devices but a form of *small media*.

With new forms of "small media" come new grounds for interacting, the dissolving of social and physical barriers, and the claiming of new social spaces. Eickelman & Anderson (2003: 10) write about new media (including "small media") as, "globalization from below", "forming communities on their own scale: interstitial, fluid and resting on shared communications, a minimal definition of what constitutes a public space". They say that such crossing of spatial boundaries has two effects: 1) the blurring of senders and receivers, producers/consumers through the performative and discursive participation of media users and 2) the blurring of public and private as these users participate in changing the shape of the "public sphere" through private interests, initiatives or interpretation. "New media refigure audiences as communities, because senders and receivers have far more in common" (*Ibid*.: 9).

In spite of the claims above, the mobile phone is not well-understood with respect to its role in facilitating community consciousness. Producers of small media may be in different places, their messages may be ephemeral and hard to track, their use is typically not designed for audiences, "publics", but rather individuals, making such a topic difficult to investigate. A growing body of research on computer-mediated communication (CMC) attests to the importance of language and in-group culture in electronic media. Mostly based on studies of

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online groups, this research shows how virtual communities are constructed through conventional expressions and interactional routines, e.g. greeting, leave-taking, turn-taking etc. (Lam 2004). The mobile phone, too, has codified elements some of which are based in real-life communication, others which are specific to mobile phone discourse. Such uses of language borrow from other media domains, such as the internet, in addition to the standard "traditional" literacy and illiteracy – languages that are not formally written – creating a hybrid discourse. As a hybrid language, it is "fuzzy" because it is an alternative to the standards of formal literacy, that which is sanctioned by the state or religious authority; its norms are established by its users. Adhering to these norms is an act of identifying with that community, or, in some cases, it may bring a community into being, through interactions specific to that medium, an alternative social space to the one designed by state authorities for the public. Such a public is not anonymous but defined by mutual participation and lateral relationships.

It is thought here that the interactive nature of SMSs is an important and tractable aspect in the unifying function of mobile phones, at least as it concerns *personal* and *socializing* functions, which are relevant for understanding discursive modes of belonging. According to Ito & Okabe (2005: 10), SMSs are different from voice calls because they can maintain an "ongoing background awareness of others" a "space of peripheral awareness that is midway between direct interaction and non-interaction". At a technical level, text messages can easily be sent or forwarded to more than one person, in effect uniting people through webs of dyadic connections based in dialogic interaction.

Therefore, I arrived in Sudan with the notion that the language of text-message interactions among Nuba people was to be my topic of investigation. This led me to the University of Khartoum, and the linguistics Department, and where researchers are currently studying Nuba languages. I was offered a visiting lecturer position there for the semester. It seemed that I was well-positioned to make contacts with Nuba students. In Sudan as elsewhere, mobile phones are especially important among university students (Brinkman *et al.* 2009). All students that I interacted with had a mobile phone, or at least a SIM card and phone number. I learned shortly that mobile phones do not yet exist in every household in the Nuba Mountains. Furthermore, two-thirds of Nuba people live outside the Mountains. Hypothesizing about the way phones function in the maintenance of geographically dispersed communities, my plan was to work from the migrant student population in Khartoum and later make a trip to the Nuba Mountains.

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Working with youth cultures: Community, identity and autonomy

Young people are said to be force behind the overwhelming adoption of the mobile phone. Many studies taken from a EURESCOM survey of mobile phone uses in Europe (Mante-Meijer *et al.* 2001) emphasize the importance of the youth market (80% or more of young people). They are accessible to this age group because of the low cost of airtime and use of pre-paid cards. Young people are also known to be the forerunners in the invention and creation of new ways of using the phone (Castells *et al*. 2007, Mante-Meijer *et al.* 2001) and one of the most innovative features of youth mobile culture is their heavy use of the SMS function (Kasesniemi & Rautiainen 2002; Ling & Yttri 2002; Thurlow 2003; Reid & Reid 2004; Ling 2005). Importantly, its accessibility, its format, and its lowcost function in the lives of youth make this form of communication one of the most significant uses of the mobile phone, many young people sending 5 to 10 messages daily.

Although the SMS was designed for commercial purposes and adults, its use among young people across the world is an example of how technology does not pre-determine use, but is ultimately co-opted in creative ways for groups with highly specific needs, a "communicative imperative". As Castells *et al*. (2007) observe, "Youth culture has found in the mobile phone an appropriate tool to express its demands for 'safe autonomy', ubiquitous connectivity, and self-constructed networks of shared social practice". One cannot work with youth culture without making reference to this age group's increasing need for autonomy, social reinforcement with peers through high frequency interactions, and the need to selectively identify with specific peer groups, i.e. collective youth identities.

Young people have embraced the SMS for social and psychological functions beyond that reported for adult mobile communication (Ling & Yttri 2002). Youth interactions via SMS, most research reports (Kasesniemi & Rautiainen 2002; Ling & Yttri 2002; Thurlow 2003; Reid & Reid 2004; Ito & Okabe 2005; Taylor & Harper 2005) are a way for young people to belong to a specific social group and to maintain friendships serving a fundamentally personal and emotional function. In some reports, 70% of SMSs among young people are affective in nature (Lorente 2002). SMS interactions are discreet, private and personal, which makes them an easy way to socialize with peers away from parents, teachers and others and a means for establishing independence from traditional hierarchical forms of control. Young women in particular and youth in general have been using the phone for social networking, especially for discreet courtship activities. The asynchronous nature of the exchange is attractive to young people as it allows time to reflect before responding, avoiding embarrassing direct confrontations (Ling & Yttri 2002), or even a safe way for socially anxious young people

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to form and extend authentic meaningful relationships (Reid & Reid 2004; Pertierra 2005).

The linguistic style of SMSs has been called a hybrid of spoken and written style (Riviere 2002; Thurlow 2003; Ling 2005), bearing similar features to other CMC/CMD (computer mediated communication/discourse) such as email or IM (instant messaging); however they are more dialogic than email and optionally asynchronous (unlike IM which is synchronous), and use phonetic and other symbols to express features of oral communication, the "embodied" text (Prøitz 2004). SMS use, therefore, has become an interesting means for the expression of identity and in-group solidarity. The reduced format of SMS writing and its widespread social use among young people has given rise to what some call a "youth code", unifying this virtual social group through shared language (Ling & Yttri 2002), thus excluding those who do not have phones or do not use the same language conventions.

While SMSs may not be as cryptic as is popularly thought (Thurlow 2003), language choice and use in this format is still a space for the display of in-group behaviour, the social-affective areas of life and the discursive negotiation of personal identity. In fact, the use of an emoticon or other code like form can be as symbolic as it is functional, displaying a users knowledge of SMS "code". Identity work can also be accomplished through a number of discursive choices. Message length, use of certain emoticons, speed of response, punctuation and registers (e.g. formal or informal written style) are all certainly correlated with the intended recipient as well as the function of the message. For example, an informational message such as direction-giving is less likely to be as coded for the simple reason of a need for clarity (Thurlow 2003). Although little research has emerged on this issue, the use and choice of language in multilingual environments is especially important in the display of identity and the assertion of status within a social group. In Africa in general this is particularly acute as standard languages that are used in most public aspects of life (e.g. education and media) may not be the same as vernacular languages.

I supposed that among young Nuba people, as with youth in the West, the in-group functions of the language of mobile telephony would be complex, correlated with a loosening of hierarchical constraints on young people's interactions as well as maintenance of Nuba identity. As they were to negotiate their identities within and across Nuba groups and among other Sudanese students, options for identification and community formation would be many, I thought. And, indeed, as it turns out, they were, although, not in the way I anticipated, or rather, hoped.

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Re-directing my research

As I will detail in Chapter 4, I discovered quickly that what I set out to study did not, in fact, exist. Nuba students at the university, irrespective of their ideologies about language, their capacity in Arabic or their affinity to their mother tongue, were not using Nuba languages in text-messaging. Arabic has long claimed hold over all written domains, and, for migrant Nuba groups, over most spoken ones as well. This is not to say that Nuba students have been "Arabized", far from it. Rather, in this context, the Nuba students were not differentiating themselves from other Sudanese students through their use of Nuba languages. However, this absence of a texting practice did not seem to complement some of what their voices and opinions were telling me, which was that a Nuba collectivity and ideology did exist. I observed it quite simply in the composition of their groups of friends, made up of students from different "tribes"[4], where the unifying factor was their shared Nuba origin, rather than their necessarily being united through kin ties. This was also evident in their participation in various student Nuba associations. I heard it in what many of them told me outright, that they were Nuba, proud of the origins, language and cultural practices, that differentiated them from other Sudanese.

I was thus confronted with a decision about how to continue my research. On the one hand, I could continue working with Nuba students, but broaden my methodology, consider evidence beyond that of the text-message, or even the telephone and look more deeply into other aspects of the lives of these students, their extracurricular lives, their homes, their relationships and a trip to the Nuba Mountains. On the other hand, I could continue with the medium that I set out to study, the mobile phone and the text-message, in particular, but work with a broader group of university students, from any ethnic or linguistic origin. I choose the second option, not because it was in any way more interesting, but because it was more feasible given my short time of four and half months in Sudan. I had a student body in front of me, a well-defined methodology, and a question about community and identity, which could be easily extended to a variety of experiences and forces that affect young Sudanese, e.g. religion, gender roles and migration in addition to ethnic and linguistic issues. In compromise, I include my experiences working with two Nuba groups in Chapter 4. Although they do not write in their own language, there is nonetheless a lot to relate about these students, the way they participate in some respects with other Sudanese practices in text-messaging, and differentiate themselves in other discursive

[4] The term "tribe" in this thesis is used according to local Arabic usage, *gabiila*, to refer to a discreet ethnic and sometimes linguistic group.

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ways. In addition, I extend the scope of this study to include other university students, from which emerged the topics of the other chapters.

I collected several types of data, mainly focusing on text messages but also supporting data, which I will summarize here. In total, I collected around 750 text messages from 56 university students, divided into four groups, based on how they were recruited to the project. The students ranged between age 17 and 28; 22 of them were female and 34 were male. Before conducting this research, many thought it improbable that I would have access to such private information as a young person's text messages. However, this turned out not to be a problem at all, and I was surprised at most students' willingness to share the contents of their inboxes and sent messages. I explained to the students that they were free to leave out messages they did not feel comfortable sharing and I obtained the permission of all participants, although it was not possible for me to obtain permission from the people who had sent *them* messages. All the same, according to my own discretion, some names have been changed for this thesis to protect the students' identity. The groups differed by methodology and composition, as my research question changed. I began with a group of six students, who were all of Nuba origin, from the Karko language and village. According to my initial methodology plan, I gave each of them a notebook and instructions for keeping a journal of their SMSs for a one week period. I interviewed them about their language attitudes, phone behaviour and use, marriage and future plans. I also conducted a small network analysis. I asked them go through each name in their contact list and state their relationship (same tribe, same family, Nuba, or other

Picture 1.2 Students on campus (picture of young woman in red top)

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friend) and location (Nuba Mountains, Khartoum, El Obeid etc.) to get a sense of the spatial geography of a migrant Nuba phone network.

The second group was composed of thirteen students from the Nuba Mountains but from various tribes and languages. They came together as a natural group of friends, most of them having met through a campus Nuba association. Different from the first group, none of these were born in the Nuba Mountains, but grew up in different areas of Sudan. Instead of giving them notebooks, I asked them to open their phones and copy previously saved or recently received/sent messages. I found this strategy much better, and easier to control. Although it did have certain disadvantages such revealing a selective picture, based on which messages hadn't already been erased. Although I conducted several interviews from this group as well, I better came to know these students informally, and many hours were spent drinking tea with them and discussing life in Sudan, the Nuba Mountains, their future plans, among other topics.

The third group included seventeen students from my second year linguistics course, "Introduction to Morphology". They were from various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, although most of them were from Khartoum. I used the same methodology with this group that I used with Group 2. I also conducted several interviews with these students in English as they were all trained in English, albeit some of them had very poor skills. My relation with this group was different than with Group 2 because I was their instructor and therefore in a position of authority. This relationship likely influenced the data they chose to share with me and their responses in the interviews. Also, as I am American, many of the students that opted to participate in the research, did so in order to practice using their English, meaning that Group 3 represents only a small slice of the students at the University, an issue which I discuss in Chapter 7.

I never met the fourth group. I gave my research assistant Rashid instructions and blank forms to use his own personal networks to collect data. Rashid speaks excellent English and was able to thoroughly grasp the aims of this project. Furthermore, he lives on campus and has a wide circle of friends. I thought that if Rashid collected information without me being present, it might forestall the informants' instincts to modify or withhold information that might be interesting and different from the other groups. It did have this advantage, although there was more data from men (15) than women (5). I had them fill out basic information sheets about mother language, age, study specialization and gender. As with any research project, this manner of collecting data is not flawless. There is ample room for error. However, with the help of two well-trained research assistants Rashid and Imen, I presented in detail the aims of the research, the necessity of copying the text-message exactly as it was written in the original, preserving all errors, spelling or otherwise, all original content, and noting the

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date and time for both sender and recipient. We also double-checked most of the students' inboxes with their copied version to ensure that they had understood.

Before conducting the interviews, with the help of my research assistants, I transliterated, or, put into Latinized script (see Appendix 1 for transcription conventions) and translated all the messages for that person so as to be able to ask specific questions about the message style and content. The structure was an open-ended interview and tended to focus on the content of the messages they had provided for me and the people and stories behind the interactions. I did not record the interviews. I had very strong feedback during the early stages of fieldwork that establishing personal friendships with the informants was the best way to have successful, insightful discussions. Formality detracted enormously from the comfort level of the interviewees, and the answers I received in more formal conditions were less elaborated. In hindsight, I should have tried recording more students as some may have reacted more positively, and I would have been able to capture more information. Most interviews were held in Sudanese Arabic, and while I can hold a basic conversation, I certainly must have missed some details.

While language use in text-messages constitutes the principle source of data, I use other supporting data, which include observations from living with a Sudanese family for one month. I took notes on privacy, behaviours in public vs. private space, male vs. female interactions, dressing styles, the discourse about mobile phones, the patterns of dating and marrying, the current and past customs related to letter-writing, patterns of keeping in touch and courtship communication in particular, the popular songs and poetry that end up in letters. Much of the information I have about phone conduct and behaviour, fashions, dating etc. come from many extended conversations with my research assistants, Rashid and Imen. Rashid was doing a Master's in Diplomatic Studies and Imen had just completed her Bachelor's in Anthropology, having written her own thesis on changing marriage practices in the Nuba Mountains.

In a final note, it should be kept in mind that the University of Khartoum is generally thought to be the best university in Sudan and its students are considered among the best as well. From what I could ascertain, those that I worked with represent the newly educated urban middle and lower-middle class. Therefore, it is by no means my intention with this data to represent all of Northern Sudanese society or even most of it. It represents only a handful of students at the University of Khartoum with whom I was lucky to work, and my interpretations are based on accounts of their own experiences and the data they elected to share with me.

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Interdisciplinarity: Organizing my ideas

The approach taken here is highly interdisciplinary, drawing from previous work in media studies, anthropology, social and anthropological linguistics and literacy studies. Engaging with each of these fields of inquiry requires juggling with varying traditions, theories and even definitions of words, such as identity or community, which are relevant here. However, the broader theoretical position taken in this research is one that has emerged in similar ways across these disciplines in understanding human behaviour as it concerns the relationship between top-down, global, structural forces and bottom-up, local and creative initiatives. The position can be minimally described by the definition of "*agency*" proposed by van Dijk *et al.* (2007), where both actor and structure mutually define each other by the "teleological insight" of "human action, intelligence, creativity, resilience and organization" (p. 6). This position situates the individual within larger structures and allows for variation and resourcefulness within certain constraints. Individual behaviour is a representation of the kinds of ways socially meaningful identit(ies) are constructed in specific interactions between people in constant negotiation with broader ideological stances. Among the students with whom I worked, mobile phone interactions must be understood both from a bottom-up perspective, where individual links build on existing social networks, and from the a top-down perspective, where ideologies of community and identity are at work. Individuals are motivated by the immediate needs of communication as they draw on larger identity constructs to suit different functions.

Agency, as both actor and structure, figures in different ways with respect to the academic disciplines above: how mobile phones enhance autonomy, how they are used in creative ways to selectively unify people rather than individualize them, how ethnic, religious and gendered identities are negotiable within local, national or global Discourses[5], how literacy practices emerge from both local knowledge and transnational ideological constructs, and how discourse and language reflect a tension between the linguistic constraints of the language, the reduced format of the mobile phone and the urge to display identity through stylistic choices. All of these have relevance in this thesis and will be discussed in conjunction with the data, within the narrative of the text.

Therefore, as will become apparent in the chapters that follow, the outcomes of this research reveal textual practices which indeed perpetuate existing discursive patterns, reflect and even reinforce dominant Discourses in Sudanese

[5] Discourse (with a capital letter), in this thesis refers to "discourse" in the broader Foucauldian sense of the term. This is different from discourse, as it is used by linguists, to refer to concrete events and instances of language, which I also employ in analyzing the data from text messages.

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society. At the same time, the phone is also used as a tool for opening up new spaces of contact, where young people agentively negotiate a variety of *identities* and seek belonging in *communities* which, in part, exist in the "real world" but are also significantly redefined or extended through mobile interaction. Such new spaces facilitate the negotiation of identities and Discourses in a way which may not have been possible without the increased *autonomy* possible with the mobile phone.

While identity, community and autonomy all emerge in this thesis in different and complex ways, these concepts cannot be understood, as stated earlier, without clear definitions within the contextual setting of this study. Therefore, I begin in Chapter 2 by introducing several of Sudan's macro-social identities, namely those resulting from its Arab and Islamic history which has merged with an indigenous African one, and the current political and social effects of such a history. The notion of being or becoming Arab, "Arabization", Muslim, "Islamization" or Sudanese, "Sudanization" with respect to recent (and even early) Sudanese history and the urban composition of Khartoum, will recur in all the subsequent chapters, as such identity-building processes have influenced the lives of all my students and contribute to the multiple meanings of an young, urban, Sudanese person.

In Chapter 3, I combine a description of the analytical techniques I use in looking at text-messages within a larger description of Sudanese communicative style. I analyze the discursive practice of text-messaging using the techniques of interactional sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. This chapter is intended to show how the textual type of interaction fits into the linguistic ecology of urban Khartoum, how it adheres to or diverges from other means of interaction, and how cooperation with respect to the norms of Sudanese society is achieved through the practice of "keeping in touch". I discuss writing conventions including the typographic symbols used, the languages and diglossic registers. Then, I discuss a narrower definition of "identity", that which is created through interaction and analyze the data from a discourse perspective, looking at aspects of identity by using the concepts of code-switching, and diglossic switching, i.e. the marked use of one language or register over another for stylistic or functional need.

Chapters 4 through 7 contrast with Chapter 3, in that they all present ways that the mobile phone is involved or discussed with respect to its facilitation of new social spaces for interaction, new autonomy for displaying or negotiating identities, and, in two of the chapters, arguably, new kinds of community. In these chapters, I bring in cases of individuals to better situate text-messaging practices, as introduced in Chapter 3, but within the narrower context of these people's lives, where social identities, in complement with discursive ones, are given

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space to emerge in mobile interactions. In Chapter 4, therefore, I return to the story of the Nuba students. As stated earlier, while text-messaging is not a causal factor, nor a defining feature of a "Nuba identity", it is, at times a reflection of one. We see, both through texting, but mostly through other evidence, an identity complex, where for these students tribal affiliations may give way to urban ones, yet notions of tribe, region and ethnicity remain important ideological constructs.

In Chapter 5, I describe a popular text-messaging practice of writing and forwarding poetry as an important aspect of "keeping in touch" in Sudan. The mobile phone's mass media function of wide-scale poetry sending and receiving illustrates how Arab-Islamic ideologies are continually remaking tradition, in this case, Sudanese colloquial poetry and song into an Arab tradition through language choice. Due to the open format of the phone, the popular writing and reworking of poetry, modeled on Classical Arabic language and poetry, is a means for the display of prestige as literacy in this medium is the mark of Arab culture and Islamic faith. I argue that the intertextual uses of poetic language in this open format for recycling poetry, in effect, creates a community, through the high frequency lateral text-messaging, claiming space in the "public sphere" through new participation.

Chapter 6 is related to the previous chapter in that the text message is a site for the expression of affective language, although with a narrower function in furthering romantic relations. I discuss how messages and other phone interactions are used in courtship. With this means of interacting, young women in particular, have more autonomy over their communications with men, and presumable more choice in potential marriage partners as well as male friends. These interactions discursively and performatively blur the boundaries of public/private space, by moving interactions designated for public space into the realm of the private. Parents, therefore, feel a loss of control over their children's interactions, which, in a conservative Muslim society, is causing moral concerns about young women in particular. Some women manage to artfully maintain a respectable Muslim identity, taking advantage of the new social space provided by the phone as well as its capacity as a protective device in screening potential suitors.

Finally, Chapter 7 concerns the mobile phone as a modern technology, which imports a whole culture of modern slang and related behaviours. It involves electronic literacy, which is indexical with notions of modernity including certain vocabulary and scripts from English and especially Arabic-speaking Gulf countries, from where much of the globalized media comes to Sudan. By using a mixed-code of English and Arabic, children of return labour migrants in the Gulf, construct their in-groupness by performing texting styles learned abroad. Some of these students profess an Arabic cultural superiority over their Sudanese peers, while in kind, local Sudanese students often ridicule them and their "foreign

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ways". Their unique identity is arguably formed through a common experience of migration, and the use of specific linguistic codes among these students unites them in a common community of practice and sentiment. In bypassing state-promoted norms of literacy, the mobile phone is allowing for an alternative social space whose inspiration resides beyond the reach of the State. In Chapter 8, I conclude this thesis with several observations which link the various themes across the chapters.

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2

Memories of Mekwar: Historical identities and student diversity

(2) ما زال ريتشارد فى مكوار
mazaala riitshaard fi makwaar
'Richard, still in Mekwar?

Mekwar is the pre-colonial name for the town in Sudan now called Sennar, on the Blue Nile south of Wad Medani, where this student is from. The name Mekwar conjures up various local myths related to the Turco-Egyptian time period, one being that Mekwar was the name of a southerner who made his camp at the site of modern-day Sennar. Sennar itself was the site of the first Islamic sultanate in Sudan, the Funj at the Kingdom of Sennar, which remains a source of pride for many Sudanese people. For some, the historical ancestry of a "Sudanese identity" is seen to have its roots in the fusion of Arab, Islamic and African cultures at the seat of the Kingdom of Sennar. Poet 'Abd al-Hai, of the Desert and Jungle School, *al-ghabba wa al-saHra'*, in his epic work, "The Return to Sennar", describes the new Sudanese "homeland", as an amalgamation of symbols taken from the jungle in the south, the desert in the north and ancient Nubian civilization (Abusabib 2004). Such a melding of indigenous, Arab and Islamic elements is one reflection of a complex Sudanese identity which persists in people's minds, as this text message sent to one student illustrates.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the social and cultural context for present day students at the University of Khartoum. They are presented with certain overarching structures and a number of options for social identification. Processes of Islamization and Arabization[1] cannot be ignored as propellers of

[1] In this research, I deal with *Arabization*, or the process of acquiring the Arab ethnic or cultural identity. *Islamization* refers to the process of acquiring Islam the religion, and is also, importantly, related to the Arabization process but not a necessary correlate of it. There are millions of Muslims that do

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Sudan's most important events, defining racial hierarchies and social inequalities which persist in the capital today. Such powerful forces have ideological correlates, Islamism and Arabism, such that some processes can be understood in terms of notions of superiority, a teleological guide to action, and others in more pragmatic terms. For example, massive rural-urban migration has in part sped up Arabization and Islamization for practical reasons, clearly based on necessity, the need to adapt to the mainstream in order to survive i.e. "Sudanization" (Doornbos 1988). The local Arabic and Islam, in turn, take as inspiration the practices and influences of Arab-Islamic culture that have been flowing into Sudan from the Arabian Peninsula and continue to have an enormous impact on notions of Sudanese identity. Thus, we can speak of at least two overarching dynamics which characterize Sudanese identity: the unequal relation between the "Center" of Sudan, geographically situated in Greater Khartoum and the "Periphery", the underdeveloped rural regions of the rest of the country, and the relation between the culture of the "Center" and the larger global Islamic community, i.e. the *umma*, symbolically positioned in Mecca, the heart of the "Middle East" and towards which inhabitants of the Nile Valley have long been oriented. I will discuss these relations with respect to relevant historical and contextual events that have led up to present day.

Pre-colonial history

The Nile which runs the length of Sudan from south to north has defined much of the region's history as Arab nomads coming from the Arabian peninsula followed its banks southwards leaving a lasting imprint on the social and cultural make-up of the territory. Arabic and Islam first came into Sudan through these Arab nomadic groups between the 7th and 16th centuries. They intermarried with local Nubians who lived along the Nile, who then acquired the religion and language and, for some groups, Arab genealogies. Such intermarriages facilitated the emergence of Islamic kingdoms in the 16th through 19th centuries, the Fur in Darfur, the Funj at Sennar and Tegali in the Nuba Mountains. These civilizations hosted merchants and itinerant Islamic Sufi scholars who facilitated the spread Arabic and Islam along the Nile and Red Sea Coast. The Arab identity and language became the symbols of authority, trade, religion and army (Miller & Abu-Manga 1992; Sharkey 2004). Later in the 19th century, the Turco-Egyptian occupation also furthered the Arabization and Islamization processes in southern areas as features of control and domination, the slave trade. Towards the end of

not claim Arab culture, language or ethnicity and there are Arabs that are not Muslims. While the two should not be confused, at times I will use examples of Islamization as a parallel process in my discussion of Arabization.

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the 19th century, Sufi scholars returning from Arabia brought notions of Islamic reform with them, characterized by closer attention to scripture and discipline, and by a desire to purge "un-Islamic" practices. The self-proclaimed Mahdi, Mohammed Ahmed, lead a religious *jihad* against the Turco-Egyptians, defeating them and establishing an Islamic state in Omdurman, until its eventual conquest by the British in 1898. However, the importance of the religious and ethnic ideology of this brief period of Islamic rule did not fade from people's memory as notions of "Arab" descent, Islam and *shar'ia* law have through the 20th century, remained indices of moral superiority, motivating many of the events, caused by these social inequalities, through the colonial period and into the independent era today.

Center vs. periphery

Two important aspects of such inequality came out of the British colonial occupation according to Niblock (1987: 204) "differentiating both regions of the country and social groupings within it (…) [and] indeed, became more marked". Niblock is referring on the one hand to the emergence of a Sudanese intellegentsia, those who benefited from colonialism, the religious and tribal leaders, merchants and educated professionals, who later became the economic and political elite, and, on the other hand, the developmental inequality between the geographic center of Sudan, the lands bordering the Nile from Nubia to Khartoum and the remainder of the country. These two imbalances are interrelated, however, because social stratification was influenced by urbanization; what people do in the city, and how they are identified was largely a function of where they were from. The long-standing racial hierarchies are iconic with the geographic divide between "Center" and "Peripheries".

The central Nile Valley is geographically the most advantageous region in Sudan with its economic potential from agriculture and trade; it allowed for the development of Nubian civilizations and the later kingdoms of Darfur and Sennar also emerged from ethnic and political links with the Nile Valley (O'Fahey & Spaulding 1974). The political elite who took over from the British and have maintained power up to today, come from the Arabic-speaking Muslim tribes who originated in this riverain North. These peoples share an Arab-Islamic political and cultural orientation and identify themselves as "Arabs"[2]. The British selectively chose these young Arab men to function as local support staff in the colonial government. In educating them, and "modernizing" them, they incurred an unintended nationalist movement, which was largely based on a self-pro-

[2] I use the term "Arab" according to local usage, to refer to those groups who claim genealogical descent from the Prophet Mohammed.

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claimed Arab and Islamic identity (Sharkey 2003b). These men drew on their own cultural categories of religious and ethnic identities as national symbols in order to define the new Sudanese nation, situating it within the larger Arab-Islamic social sphere. The dominance of the "Arab" heritage phased out the difference between other ethnic categories in Sudan, which were uniformly grouped together as "Blacks", although many self-identified Arabs would acknowledge a mixed heritage.

The term *sud* "Black" is used to refer to people from Southern Sudan, part of Darfur and the Nuba Mountains, and is used interchangeably with *januubi/iyya* 'Southerner' in common discourse. In Sudan, Black is more of a category than a color, since even so-called "Arabs" can be as dark as Black Africans. The term *suudaani*[3] 'Sudanese' was used to refer to those who could be captured as slaves. Islamic law forbids taking Muslims as slaves; Arabs therefore had to conduct slave raids in the South and the Nuba Mountains in non-Arab, non-Muslim regions. During the Turco-Egyptian occupation in the 19th century, slaves were so cheap and plentiful (one-third of the North's population) that even modest families had them (*Ibid.* 2003). A transition to wage labour followed the British abolition of slavery when many ex-slaves adopted Islam but were not as easily assimilated ethnically. Their skin color was not the reliable index, but family origins were. The British used a simple dichotomy to classify people as "Arab", entailing a distinction between Muslim Northerners or "Black", meaning ex-slave, non-Muslim Southerners. Blackness, therefore, was a social class associated with one's *gabiila* 'tribe'.

British educational policies under the Anglo-Egyptian rule, which separated the North from the South through the Closed District Ordinance of 1922, favoured Arabs over Blacks, deepening an already existing racial divide, and worsening prejudices. Similar to British colonial policies elsewhere in Africa, an agreement was drawn with the indigenous elite of Arab origin, the *awlaad al-balad* 'sons of the land'. The British provided "law and order" while the *awlaad al-balad* provided a network of tribal, Sufi or Mahdist elite collaborators (O'Fahey 1995 cited by Abusabib 2004). In the North, they cultivated the sons of Northern elites as administrators of the colonial bureaucracy while those of Southern origins were sent for training as manual labourers. In the South they left education to the Christian missionaries. Thus, at independence, the natural consequence of these policies was for the most educated and powerful Northern Arabs to take power. The Center, therefore, is not only a geographic concept but

[3] The name Sudan also means 'black' in Arabic, named by the early Arab traders who arrived in Africa for the vast region, the *Bilad al-Sudan* 'Land of the Blacks' between modern-day Ethiopia and Senegal across the Sahel.

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a socio-economic one, where the majority of the country's investment in government, education and industry was concentrated in the North and the urban center, to the advantage of the Arab elite (Hale 1997). These economic structures have existed since, and are some of the principle causes of the South's grievance since independence.

A final way the Center is distinguished from the Periphery, and the one with most relevance to this study concerns the cultural dominance of the Center, the ruling elite, and the suppression of peripheral Northern and all Southern identities, by these same people[4]. As Abusabib (2004: 44) puts it, "The very existence of Sudan as a unified political entity hinges on the type of identity attributed to Northern Sudan and its people". Expressing the view shared by most scholars on Sudan, he continues, "The Northern elite's rule over Sudan since independence has been guided by the firm conviction that the country's identity is Arabic-Islamic, that Arabic-Islamic culture is (racially and morally) superior to the other Sudanese cultures, and that non-Arabic and non-Islamic elements will eventually be assimilated into this culture" (*Ibid.*: 45). In spite of its Arab-Islamic orienttation, this culture is based in Sudanese circumstances, and carries attributes of the riverain culture of this Northern ruling elite, which combine local indigenous culture(s) with Arab-Islamic ones. Some nationalists were inspired by the hybrid nature of Sudanese culture and espoused an ideology of Sudanism[5], which I will discuss more in Chapter 5.

At independence in 1956, political, economic and military strategies were used to integrate Peripheries with the Center. However, economic imbalances remained along with social prejudices, grievances which prompted the Southerners to demand Federal status. This request which was entirely suppressed by the Northern Government, motivated the first rebellion in the South, the Anyaya I guerillas and later the birth of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army (SPLM/A). It is a conflict which has continued, with few interruptions up to the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The North, with the idea that the cultural, linguistic and religious differences were the main reason for the South's

[4] Al Sadiq al Mahdi, leader of the Umma Party and descendant of Mohamed Ahmed al-Mahdi, embodies the Northern elite's ideology saying in an address to the Sudan Constitutional Assembly in 1966, "the dominant feature of our nation is an Islamic one and its overpowering expression is Arabic, and this nation will not have its entity identified and its prestige and pride preserved except under an Islamic revival" (Proceedings of the Sudan Constitutional Assembly, October 1966, quoted in Abusabib 2004).

[5] Use of the term "*Sudanese"* as a cultural attribute is usually based in the concept of Sudanism, that which distinguishes Sudan from other Arab and Islamic countries, and based in the hybrid culture of the Northern riverain elite.

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rebellion, embarked on a policy of thorough ISLAMIZATION and ARABIZATION[6] of the country.

Ethno-linguistic peripheries and national identity

In Africa, where modern borders have been drawn across rather than around continuous ethno-linguistic areas, definitions of national identity become extremely complex. The importance of a common language or languages within a nation-state cannot be overstated as a unifying force, a clear marker of identity and belonging. In a simple case, a single common language in a nation-state is meant to efface local or regional ethno-linguistic discontinuities and create unity at the national level. European states provide many examples of the success of a single language policy (with notable exceptions such as Belgium and Spain), and not coincidentally Europe is also the point of reference for the "modernization" process. However, while Sudan's government is Arab and Islamic, its population (around 30 million) is two-thirds Muslim, the remainder practicing either Christianity or Animism. The people come from one of 57 different African ethnic groups and 570 so-called "tribes[7]" (Sudan Government 1993, cited by Abusabib 2004). Linguistically, 142 distinct languages not including dialects (Ethnologue 2008) are spoken although Arabic is the only officially endorsed language, and functions as a lingua franca between groups. Many of these non-Arabic languages, are spoken in the Peripheral regions of the South, the Nuba Mountains, Darfur, the most important being Dinka, Beja, Nuer, Fur, Zande, Nubian and Bari among others (Miller & Abu-Manga 1992). In spite of this diversity, Sudan, since independence, has rigorously pursued a policy of ARABIZATION in all aspects of public life especially education and media (Nyombe 1994; Manger 2001; Sharkey 2008). This was in part a reaction to reverse the British policy of Southern separation and to accelerate the spread of Arab-Islamic culture in the South and Nuba Mountains areas.

Arabic was declared the only official language after independence.[8] In the South where English and Christianity were left from colonial education, such policies meant that intermediate Islamic schools and centers for preaching were opened, Arabic replaced English as the language of instruction, Fridays replaced

6 I use all capitals to differentiate the policies of ARABIZATION/ISLAMIZATION from practices which I leave with initial capitals.

7 The first 1956 census classified these into eight groups: Arabs (39%), Nilotics (20%), Westerners of Dar Fur (13%), Nuba (5%), Eastern Southerners (5%), Nubians (5%), and foreigners (7%) although these figures are not very reliable, nor do these categories have much meaning.

8 Amendments to this policy came with the 1972 Addis-Ababa agreement recognizing English as a principal language in the South (Miller & Abu-Manga 1992; Nyombe 1994) and later the Navaisha Agreement in 2005 acknowledging all Sudanese vernaculars as national languages.

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Sundays as the day of rest and with the nationalization of Christian schools, Christian missionaries were expelled from the South (Nyombe 1994; Manger 2001; Sharkey 2008). While Southern Sudan has famously resisted this Arab-Muslim cultural hegemony, the Islamic civilizing project has been more successful in most areas of Northern Sudan, although not without much bloodshed. Many Nuba, some of whom are Muslims, were killed or displaced in the recent civil war, blamed as apostates of Islam for their political association with the SPLA, regardless of their religion (Salih 1995; de Waal & Abdel Salam 2004).

In spite of overt strategies of resistance from the South, the Nuba Mountains and more recently, Darfur, the vast majority of the people are using the Arab and Islamic identity as a means for advancing their own situation in life. Doornbos (1988) described the strategic adoption of the dominant "Sudanese" lifestyle and culture as an "imitation" of an "Arab" way of life, although "Arab", here, refers to a Sudanese way of life that emerged along the Nile, rather than in the Middle East, and subsequently defined the culture of the socio-economic elite of Sudan. He offers a political and economic definition: being "'Sudanized' means to be able to participate spiritually and materially as a member of the top stratum of traders and officials and to be taken seriously, be considered trust and credit worthy" (p. 100). In the independent era, this long-standing natural process has also sped up, mainly due to the increased dependence on the Center by the Peripheries. This is distinct from ARABIZATION and ISLAMIZATION, which, since independence, became state policies, and illustrates the natural integration processes that have been taking place in the region for centuries, and continue today.

Processes of migration: The making of the urban capital

The capital of Sudan is in fact made up of three towns, Khartoum, Omdurman and Khartoum North (Bahri), divided by the Blue and White Niles and known collectively as Greater Khartoum. The capital, first was established in Khartoum in 1830 during Turco-Egyptian occupation, but was destroyed by the successor to the Mahdi, Khalifa Abdullahi, and resettled at Omdurman on the opposite side of the White Nile. Omdurman exploded in size during Mahdism, when the Khalifa called on many groups to come there, especially Baggara cattle nomads, to consolidate his control. In part, due to its legacy as the seat of the Madhi, Omdurman became and remained the cultural capital and birthplace of the urban lifestyle of the Northern Sudanese elite class. Later, during British colonial rule, Khartoum was re-established as the capital but it never held the same fondness for Sudanese, as the spiritual heart of the nation. This was evidenced in the nationalist movement which took root in Omdurman, alongside literary and artistic movements there. It is in Omdurman, in fact, that the local Arab tribes, e.g. *ja'aliyyin*,

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first established an urban social and intellectual life, setting the trend for the development of what came to be known as *the* "Sudanese" culture that I discussed in the last section.

During the British colonial occupation, ex-slaves migrated to Khartoum mainly (Sharkey 2003b). Jobs were in demand for the building of new infrastructures and former slaves saw more opportunities there than remaining as labourers in agriculture. Businesses attracted workers, the towns grew, as did administrative and social structures; public works and telecommunications expanded. Whereas Cairo had previously been a major immigration magnet during the Turco-Egyptian occupation, Khartoum now was a major destination. Nubians came from the North. West-African Fellata, eastward migrants performing the *Hajj*, came from Nigeria and Chad but often remained in Khartoum, a trend which has continued up to the late 20th century. The Fellata are known to have resisted adopting "Sudanese" culture, practicing distinct customs, and maintaining their own language, and separate Qur'anic schools (Sharkey 2004). Those seeking improved lifestyle were excluded from this community and sought to adopt Sudanese and Arab identities instead. Other migrants came during the colonial periods including Greeks, Armenians, Syrians and Lebanese who controlled, and to date, control a large portion of the business sector. The British policies of excluding the Arabs from the South and Nuba Mountains had somewhat of a reverse effect than intended. Migrants from these regions came in order to seek greater opportunities which lay among the Arabs of the plains and to the North (Manger 2001). It was simply more advantageous to belong to the economic Center, to adopt the lifestyle of the ruling elite – Sudanization.

These and other groups all form part of a large rural-urban migration pattern over the 20th century. The population of Greater Khartoum grew from around 90,000 in 1905 to 245,000 in 1955. Most of such urban migrations were for socio-economic reasons but they also included soldiers in the army that were transferred to Khartoum, seasonal labourers looking for work, families meeting up with the men who first migrated (Miller & Abu-Manga 1992; Sharkey 2004). Large-scale agricultural schemes such as the cotton-growing schemes of Gezira and Gedarif attracted many Nuba and other people of Kordofan province northward.

In the post-colonial period, from 1956, many of the upper class migrated to Egypt, or even to one of the Communist-bloc countries in Eastern Europe for education. Migrations to Egypt were already common and many who had migrated prior to Sudanese independence had a confused national identity as both Egyptians and Sudanese (Fabos 1999) which is now reflected in uncertain estimates about the actual number of Sudanese in Egypt, between two and five million (U.S. Committee for Refugees 1998, cited by Sharkey 2004). Other des-

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tinations include Britain as the previous colonizer, which offered education, commonwealth status and a model of modernity for young students. The United States and Canada later became important places for students to obtain an education in the 1970s.

During this same decade, higher salaries in the rich Arab states, Saudi Arabia and Libya, became attractive to the Northern Sudanese educated professionals who were confronting an economic crisis at home. The "brain drain" was accompanied by a mass movement of labour migrants to these Arab countries; they worked as manual labourers, cooks, servants, construction workers and other jobs. Most of the money, transferred through remittances, went back into savings for Sudanese homes, marriages or community development projects. In the 1980s between a quarter and one half million migrants, or two-thirds of Sudan's professional and skilled workers were working abroad (Brown 1992). In the late 1980s many of these migrants returned, bringing with them new notions of what it means to be Arab and Muslim. Bernal (1997) found that return migrants from Saudi Arabia brought back new forms of Islamic propriety, which were deemed more "authentic" or Islamic than so-called "traditional" Sudanese customs. As Hale (1997) has argued these return migrants are part of the process that set in motion the resurgence of orthodox Islam in the "public sphere" which I will discuss shortly.

Also in the 1980s, civil war returned in the South and later in the Nuba Mountains, creating a massive internal displacement of people. In 1983, a famine and drought combined with war-related displacements caused up to 80% of people to move north (U.S. Committee for Refugees, cited by Sharkey 2004), which included 1.8 million migrants to Greater Khartoum, where, some scholars observe, many have remained. In 1983, the population of Greater Khartoum was estimated at 1,343,000, which means that this influx more than doubled the population at the time. As migrants adapted to urban life, their children grew up in the urban setting, it made sense for many communities to stay there than return to their place of origin, which is what was occurring in Khartoum in the 1990s (Miller & Abu-Manga 1992). The city had running water, electricity, hospitals, schools, even TV among other things.

Such rapid urbanization of migrant communities is reportedly causing a massive shift toward Arabic in Khartoum (*Ibid.*) especially as young people more frequently speak it as a first language. Linguistic changes in the direction of Sudanese Colloquial Arabic[9] in the capital are clearly a part of the Sudanization

[9] Sudanese Colloquial Arabic (SCA) is the dialect of the capital, which is the main Arabic lingua-franca of all groups there now, and a conglomerate of vocabulary from various regional dialects and languages.

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process, as migrants slowly adopt the language and culture of the elite Northern groups who first settled in Khartoum. However, as Miller (2006) cautions, postulating a linear spread in the direction of Arabic is also problematic, since local processes of adaptation, Sudanization or otherwise, are highly varied. As recent migrant groups now constitute the majority of the Khartoum population, there is also increasing linguistic and cultural diversity, e.g. music from the South or Darfur circulates in popular media. Language is also slower to change than religion. From early on some Islamized groups retain their local integrity through maintenance of their own languages (Sharkey 2004), and an "Arab" genealogy does not necessarily correlate with the adoption of Arabic and Islam (Doornbos 1988; Miller 2006). Miller & Abu-Manga observed in 1992 that while Arabization is an inevitable process, language ideologies remain strong among speakers of other languages, as do cultural practices such as singing and dancing, although I found this to be less pronounced among the Nuba students that I worked with fifteen years later. We see, therefore, that processes of rural-urban migration encouraged an increasing Sudanization pattern in Greater Khartoum, at the same time, fueling cultural diversity among the over four million inhabitants of the capital. Furthermore, migrants returning from long stays abroad have influenced the social landscape of Khartoum with their higher social status: new understandings of Islam and "appropriate" Muslim practices and a wealth of Gulf-dialect vocabulary related to luxury, traveling, foreign currency and modern electronics (*Ibid.*). The children of these migrants, many of whom have spent their entire lives in one of the Arab states of the Gulf, also contribute to the diversity of Sudanese experiences as they speak a slightly different Sudanese dialect, heavily influenced by English, Egyptian and Gulf Arabic dialects.

The National Islamic Front (NIF) and the new Islamic state

Above, I discussed how Islamization and Arabization were natural processes until independence, after which the Government rendered them into policies. While these policies were first in place in order to unite the nation socially and culturally, they have hardened in recent decades. In 1989, the National Islamic Front (NIF) party of Hasan al-Turabi, an Islamic fundamentalist political party with origins in the Muslim Brotherhood, took over power in a coup d'état, the "National Salvation Revolution" led by Lt. Gen. Omar al-Bashir, replacing the civilian government of the Umma party with an Islamic military one. The subsequent curtailment of democratic processes with the rise of political Islam meant that Parliament, the elected assembly, was dissolved, the Constitution was suspended and all political parties and unions were outlawed (Hale 1987: 88-89). *Shar'ia* law was implemented and humanitarian rights were suspended. An important aspect of this Islamic revolution was the ISLAMIZATION of the

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"public sphere", which meant the eradication of non-Islamic elements from all aspects of public life. Public space was ISLAMIZED through the building of mosques, the painting of buildings an Islamic green, and restrictions of women's movement and dress. It also entailed the ISLAMIZATION of culture and knowledge through institutions such as the media, art associations and especially education, which were all purged of dissidents and replaced with NIF supporters. In terms of schooling, it was important to replace the "liberal" Western-style education set up by the British, with an Islamic one. The NIF concentrated on infusing schools and universities with an Islamic ethos.

Picture 2.1 The University of Khartoum

The University of Khartoum, where this study took place, was formerly Gordon College, an elite British colonial training college modeled on British preparatory education. Now as a nationalized school, it is a crumbling relic, and known as the primary training ground for NIF supporters. It embodies the NIF's best attempts at an ISLAMIZED education: it has as active presence in on-campus student unions, NIF officials took posts in top administrative positions, and new students were required to serve in the Popular Defense Force militia (Hale 1987: 201).

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Not surprisingly, Arabic became the principle language of instruction at the University of Khartoum, even in disciplines where English had dominated, rendering the quality of education, according to many that I spoke with, highly wanting. According to a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, Arabic is the only permissible language as it is the sacred language, the only way of accessing God through the words of the Qur'an. This thinking is reflected in the words of the Director General of ISESCO (Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) in reference to its Arabic language programs (Altawaijiri 2004: 35):

> [This] is not simply an educational and learning enterprise, a cultural and literary activity (…) it stands at the core of shoring up the constituents of the Arabic identity (…) protecting the specificities of Arab and Islamic societies and the pillars of the Arabic culture and the Arab and Islamic civilization.

Altawaijri is referring to the ideology of the Islamic resurgence, that religion is inseparable from other aspects of life (Salih 2002). Arabic is a secular medium as well as a religious one, a civilizing force, and a record of history.

However, as I discussed above, and as Sharkey (2008) argues, ARABIZATION as a post-colonial policy has been a failure when compared with the success of a natural integration and Arabization taking place in Sudan since the 16th century, as a "long-unfolding cultural process". The enforcement of Arabic language policies has provoked hostility, resistance, and "undermined the very national unity that its proponents sought to achieve" (p. 22). In the aftermath of the last civil war, the 2005 signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement,[10] and the return of many migrants and refugees from abroad, it is currently an open question how young Sudanese people choose to situate themselves within the larger processes described here, with a range of options, the influence of historically constructed social categories, current social pressures and practical needs, in conjunction with individual instincts and desires for the future.

What does it mean to be Sudanese?

As theories of globalization recognize, on one level, people are increasingly united by common globalizing trends, but at the same time, increasingly differentiated locally (Appadurai 2001). It is this tension between global, national and local identities and communities, which captures many of the processes that emerge in the data in the chapters of this thesis. In this chapter, the natural spread of Arabic and Islam, the strength of the Center, urban migration and migration abroad, ARABIZATION and Sudanization, and the surge in Islamic fundamentalism are all processes of creating cultural uniformity, be it increased identifica-

[10] The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in Naivasha, Kenya between the ruling Northern National Congress Party and the SPLA/M ending the twenty-year civil war.

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tion with the Middle East, or homogeneity at the national level. In the early British era, the University of Khartoum was founded on a principle of unity to serve the colonial regime and to provide a cultural model for the colony based on a "Sudanese" identity. In order to do so, they selectively educated Arab and Muslim young men, to provide local leaders that would set the model. However, in the urban campus of the University of Khartoum, there persists, rather, a diversity of cultural, linguistic and ethnic identities. In addition to local students, many come from different directions for many reasons: some came from the North near the border of Egypt, others from the South or Nuba Mountains, West from Darfur, or from abroad, the Gulf states. Some moved with their families for reasons of war, as described above, or alone just for study. Many of them, who do not originate from Khartoum, meet each other in one of the university dormitories near campus. Here, they converge, forming new friendships, yet maintain links with their respective homes, being at once urban and Sudanese, a part of the Center, with all that that entails, and also members of other communities, those of the Periphery or abroad.

In many cases, we see that the Periphery models itself literally and figuratively on the Center, while the Center, in turn, models itself on the Middle East. This dual-ideology perspective helps us to better differentiate between global and local processes, between pragmatic strategies and ideological notions and from local manifestations of globally-inspired changes, as they all participate in the formation of local, national and global identities. Such varied individual outcomes to these larger social trends all seem to revolve around one central question: What does it mean to be Sudanese? What are the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and gendered features of a young Sudanese university student today? How is a Sudanese identity reflected, reinforced or changed through new communication possibilities associated with the mobile phone? What kinds of identities or communities subvert dominant Sudanese identities? As the following chapters will show, I will attempt to answer these questions through the stories of the students at the University of Khartoum.

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3

Discourse and identity: Texting in the Sudanese communicative ecology

(3) مشتاقيييين
mushtaagiiiin
'I miiiiiiss you'

This piece of SMS data represents one of the most common expressions not only in text messages, but in spoken communication, and is said and heard multiple times daily by most all Sudanese people. Unlike its English translation, its use is not limited to intimate utterances between close friends or lovers, but is quite appropriate between acquaintances, or even colleagues. It's been said to me even after having met someone once. It commonly works its way into most greeting sequences, the appropriate response being *bil-aktar* 'even more so'. It is especially said by young women and is usually spoken enthusiastically, with a higher pitch and more loudly than normal speech. In the text above, we can see the emotional affect marked with a repeated long vowel *yaa* (iiii).

This chapter shows how the textual interaction relates to broader communication patterns and oral conversational style in the Sudanese context, how it adheres to or diverges from other means of interaction, and how cooperation is achieved is this medium. It is understood as one context for the expression of an urban Northern Sudanese identity and culture. In text-messaging, we see features of Sudanese Colloquial Arabic[1] which normally dominates oral domains, as well as a modern form of Classical Arabic, *fuSHa*[2], which dominates written domains,

[1] Sudanese Colloquial Arabic (SCA), the main dialect of Arabic spoken in Greater Khartoum, is also referred to as Khartoum Arabic (Miller & Abu-Manga 1992) but I will use the former term or its acronym (SCA) in this thesis.

[2] *fuSHa* (pronounced *fuus-Ha*) is the Arabic term for Classical Arabic (CA), called Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in the American academic community. I use both *fuSHa* and CA interchangeably.

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showing how the text message is a hybrid medium which reflects Arab cultural ideologies associated with literacy as well as a medium which contests those norms, through an expression of *Sudanese-ness* in the writing of SCA. Thus, a Sudanese communicative setting is in part defined by its relations with the larger Arab-Islamic world, and by the indigenous Northern Sudanese culture that developed in Khartoum. Furthermore, as I will elaborate on in later chapters, the flexible informal context of the mobile phone, allows for the emergence of sub-national identities or even alternative trans-national identities to the broadly sketched Arab-Islamic one described in Chapter 2.

First, I give a broad description of the communicative culture in Greater Khartoum, situating the mobile phone within the cultural pattern of 'keeping in touch', then I discuss how texting practices exhibit language patterns that reflect discursive norms outside the context of the phone, how the phone is a semi-oral medium that builds on and extends pre-existing patterns and works within mainstream urban Sudanese culture. In the third section, I suggest that the SMS is not only used for perpetuating social norms, but is also a tool for the expression of discursive identities, acts of alignment which identify people with a "community of practice" by way of individual linguistic behaviours. I analyze features of SMS discourse drawing mostly from the methodological tools developed by interactional sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. I first discuss the way I use the concept of *identity* narrowly, reviewing the relevant literature as it pertains to the sociolinguistic approach. Then I present data which exemplifies several ways that identity work is accomplished in text-messaging through discursive[3] interaction, the issues of code-switching, footing and positioning as they relate to the diglossic[4] (Classical and Sudanese Colloquial Arabic) language situation, the use of multiple scripts and other languages. I mostly limit my analysis to the identities of Sudanese communicative style, situated in discursive interaction, while, in the later chapters (4–7), using these techniques combined with ethnographic data, I broaden my analysis to larger social issues, Discourses in the broader sense and macrosocial identities such as those explored in Chapter 2.

---

3 Interactive discourse, as it is used here, is distinguished from discourse. While much has been said about discourse and language in the media as a process of social organization and community formation, few look at "naturally occurring language in use" (Spitulnik 2002a) as the concrete events and instances of language that make up the larger Discourses. Paying attention to the way they are contextually employed enlightens us as to how social structures influence language choice.

4 Diglossia is situation where two registers of language are used, in this case Sudanese Colloquial Arabic and Classical Arabic, which are differentiated by the formality of the context, informal vs. formal, in this case.

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'Keeping in touch': Sudanese communicative style

The text message in (3) above, an example of affective language**,** is indicative of a theme that is repeated regularly in Sudanese communication, that of '*keeping in touch'* which has been described for other Arabic-speaking peoples[5] (Feghali 1998). I will draw on Feghali's analysis to describe aspects of Sudanese communication in order to situate how mobile phones function in that larger context. "Affectiveness" has been described as the use of emotional appeal in communicative style, where "repeated words, phrases and rhythms move others to belief, rather than the 'quasilogical' style of Western logic". In many of my interactions with Sudanese friends and host family, in particular, the first remarks are, why had not I come sooner, why had not I called more frequently, at least to let them know I was ok. Often I would receive an SMS or a brief phone call, the purpose of which was to check in, ask if I was fine, 'please let me know if you are OK!', with no other exchange of information. In the SMS data as well, declarations of missing and inquiries about why someone has not kept in touch are dominant. The following messages are typical examples of these types of inquiry.

(3.1) يرجى الاتصال
yurja al-ittiSal
'Please call'

(3.2) يا ود يا صحابى انت وين قاطع الخبر
ya wadd ya SaHabbi inta ween gaaTi' al-khabar
'Hey boy, hey pious one, where are you, your news is not coming'

(3.3) كيف يا ولد أضرب خلينا نشوف اخبارك شنو
kef ya walad aDHrab khalliina nashuuf akhbarak shinuu
'What's up, boy, call us to let us know how you are'

It seems that the communication is not about the content, the transfer of information, but rather about the fact of keeping in touch itself. The gesture of contact is sufficient for maintaining friendships. Many of my loose acquaintances, continued to maintain friendship with me through occasional calls or texts, in spite of our not continuing to meet in person. In my experience, in Western contexts, the relationship, if not deepened through increased contact and more

[5] It is not my intention to simplify Sudanese culture by labeling it and its people Arab. Sudan is clearly a multi-ethnic and multilingual country with cultural features attributable to both Arab and indigenous African societies. As described in Chapter 2, definitions of Arab and Sudanese are exceedingly complex. Nonetheless, and in spite of the diversity of Greater Khartoum, there is a dominant culture, largely shaped by the self-identified "Arabs" of Northern Sudan, one which shares many cultural attributes with the larger Arab world, especially but not limited to language, and a wealth of shared behaviours associated with the Islamic faith.

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personalized talk, would naturally dissolve. In Sudan, loose friendships were easy to maintain simply via occasional texting.

A distinction has been drawn between high-context, and low-context cultures, where the difference between the two is how much meaning comes out of context versus what is actually said. Feghali (1998: 358, summarizing Hall 1982) says, "Arab societies have been labeled high context, with little information coded explicitly in a message but present in the physical context or internalized in the interactants". In high-context cultures, much of the interpretive work is done by the listener, as information is not communicated directly, or simply is not relevant, such as in the above examples, where the act of connecting is more important than the transfer of information. During the week of '*aid al-fitr*, the holiday following Ramadan, I accompanied the Hamad family with whom I was living at the time, on a *ziyaara* 'visiting', where representatives of the immediate family goes around to see some of the extended families. A minivan was hired for the day, and a visiting plan was made according to the distance between the houses. No phone calls were made in advance to schedule the visits, and each visit lasted around ten minutes, with the same reception. We were welcomed, seated in the front room, brought juice or soda, and brief greetings were exchanged mostly inquiries about absent families, and then we left. Some of the visits were more talkative than others, but long silences were normal, and didn't seem to make anyone nervous, except myself. Differently from my own family visits, where lots of conversation keeps the event going, these visits were about the visit itself, not about catching up, or necessarily talking much. Later, many young Sudanese people told me that they dislike these obligatory visits, but that if they do not do it, 'there will be a lot of talk' *kalaam*, which is worse than anything. The importance of regular contact is, for some, more manageable now due to the mobile phone. According to Hiba[6] who operates small credit-transfer service:

> "[The phone] made many changes, for example, in the past people used to blame others if they don't visit them or ask about their news even if those blamed don't have enough money to do these visits. But now this has stopped. You can use the mobile phone to call people and know their news, so there is *no* more blame. Now within extended families, your aunt, your grandparents, you can keep in touch with them which keeps you closer to them and this is a result of the mobile phone. Maybe I can't travel to visit those relatives and if I don't have any device to communicate with them they will blame me, but now mobile phones ease all these things."

The mobile phone, for some, is a convenient tool, as it allows one to avoid in-person visits, and to make excuses. For others, however, it is a burden, since by having a mobile, people expect others to be available anytime, as an important

6 Interview 9/8/2007 conducted by de Bruijn *et al.* 2008a.

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part of collectivist culture, "where loyalty to one's extended family and larger "in-group" takes precedence over individual needs and goals" (Feghali 1998). My research assistant, Rashid, turned his phone off the entire week of *'aid al-adha*. He later told his family that his phone was broken, but told me that he just didn't feel like going home for a visit, and by pretending his phone was dead, he was exempt from explanation. Like Rashid, others see the phone as means for escaping social responsibility. According to Abdel Moneim[7]:

> "(…) it is possible to say 'Sorry, I am out of Khartoum, in Medani, or anywhere else' (…) [this is] not deceit, but people can not accommodate the special circumstances of others (…) I believe that such behaviour is to create more time even if I feel compelled not to tell real facts. For example (…) when I need time to rest it may be difficult to explain it to others, especially in our Sudanese society. This kind of explanation is not acceptable to others, therefore it is best to conceal my situation. I do not consider that a real lie, because people are not able to know how others are feeling".

The mobile phone is therefore a tool for indirectness, a behaviour associated with high-context and collectivist cultures (Feghali 1998), where face-saving techniques and courtesy take precedence over factualness, according to Western standards. As these two examples show, it is preferable either to lie about one's whereabouts or feign a broken phone, concealing individual desires, than to declare the need for personal space.

Collectivism and indirectness seem to characterize the other phone behaviours that I witnessed. By having a phone, a person is accessible, unless something out of one's control occurs, e.g. the battery dies, or the phone is left at home. According to Leila Hamad, my host sister, if she can't return a call that was made to her within a couple hours, she makes profuse apologies to the person, as this is interpreted badly. From my observations, if the phone is on, the person will usually either answer immediately, whether he is in a meeting or a public bus or reply within a few hours, only rarely a day later. If the phone is off, the person is exempt from responsibility since the service providers do not send notifications of missed calls while the phone is off. Another of my informants, Joseph Kuku, told me that when he goes into the Mosque to pray, he puts his phone on silent, because it only takes five minutes, and any missed calls can be returned immediately. However, during university lectures, he turns his phone off entirely because the lecture lasts two hours, and the caller may be angry thinking he or she is being ignored.

These are some of the broad patterns of communication in Arabic-speaking societies in general and Sudan in particular. The mobile phone is both a tool for 'keeping in touch' and for artfully avoiding that social obligation. It has worked its way into the fabric of Sudanese interactions, a means for extending existing

7 Interview 7/8/2007, de Bruijn *et al*. 2008a.

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cultural patterns. In the next section, I will present a narrower analysis of communicative norms drawing a comparison between oral communication and text messaging. The space of the text message allows for a wide range of expression, some aspects of which deviate from normal written styles by permitting an informal, colloquial and oral type of writing, and others which adhere to standard formal writing conventions.

Texting as a semi-oral medium

As technologies such as reading and writing are adopted, they bring with them notions of how communication *should* be. Goody (1968) saw Arabic in West Africa as a 'technology of literacy', and a symbol of modernity; the cell phone too, as an instrument of modernity according to this line of thought, should be shaping language (although some would see this as negative compared with the positive view of reading and writing "traditional" texts). Nonetheless, literacy, in this view is a fixed, autonomous bundle of skills that is transferred from one knowing group to another group. However, critics of the "Great Divide" theory of "literate" vs. "oral" societies have challenged this dichotomizing view, arguing that a clear-cut distinction cannot be made between written and spoken practices, that text and speech are intertwined in daily use and local contexts shape and determine the processes for coding culturally significant information. Scribner & Cole (1981) replaced "literacy" as a set of imported, de-contextualized, information-processing skills which people applied with "literacy practices" as socially organized practices in which people engaged. At the local level, these can include such wide-ranging activities as oral memorization and recitation of religious "texts", various ways of reading aloud, ways of talking that seems text-like. Or, as it concerns the present research, literacy in electronic tools such as computers and phones can yield text that seems talk-like - computer mediated communication literacy (CMC). Indeed, an SMS as a hybrid of written-oral style is an example of the way text and talk interact.

The first analysis concerns the typographic tools that the students are using to write messages, how the limited format and characters in the phone are adapted to the need for expression. Previous studies in computer-mediated discourse (CMD) and on SMSs in particular (Thurlow 2003; Liénard 2006) have shown them to exhibit a hybrid style, between oral and written norms, certainly due to the informal, expressive possibilities of this medium for youth cultures, discussed in the Introduction. Oral features of texting which distinguish it from formal writing include shorter and more frequent dialogic turns, a more phonetic writing

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style < R U OK?>[8], and the use of symbols to mark stress and intonation in order to express emotions, <☺> or <nooooo!!!!>. My data show some of the features distinguishing SMS communication from traditional writing practices, the most important of which is the use of the Sudanese Colloquial dialect in written form. Observe the message (3.4):

(3.4) ولا ما كدا؟!.....
…….?!walla ma kida
'……?!or not like that'

The message is clearly part of a larger discussion, a response to a previous message, which is more like an oral dialogic exchange than traditional writing. One has the impression that the sender is emotional from the use of punctuation. One phonetic feature is used, the repeated dots < ….. > to indicate a pause, and the rise in intonation, surprise and confusion, is expressed with an exclamation and question mark. We also saw in (3) at the beginning of this section the use of a repeated grapheme, <ي>, the long (ii) in the verb *mushtaagiin* 'missing' where extending the vowel mimics emphatic oral pronunciation as it would in the English 'I miiiiiiiss you!' Other features which differentiate the writing of colloquial language from written standards include limited sentence punctuation, commas and periods, frequent misspellings and occasional accent stylizations.

(3.5) . يسألونى لمازا أعزكم ؟ ما أغباهم كأتهم يسالونى لمازا أتن
yas'aluuni limaaza 'azzakum? ma aghbaahum ka'annohum yas'aluuni limaaza atanafas[9]
'They ask me why I appreciate them they are foolish as they ask me why I breathe'

In this example, written in standard Arabic, the word *limaaza* 'why' is written with a <ز >, the /z/ sound, characteristic of its dialectical pronunciation, rather than a (DH) which in standard Arabic should be written with a <ظ> instead. Whether this was an error or an intentional stylization isn't certain as other dialectical spellings were rare in the data. This substitution, however, was very common across the data.

Overall, the use of non-standards spellings, shortenings, acronyms, homophones and other typographic simplifications is limited in the Arabic of this data. In Sudanese Arabic, the letter, <ق> (q), is systematically pronounced as a (g) sound, but this change is not written. Interestingly dialectal pronunciations such

[8] In text, brackets (i) are used for phonetic symbols, written text is indicated as in <text>, Arabic or other language transliterations in italics, and English translations in apostrophes ' '. See Appendix 1 for sound–symbol correspondences.

[9] Underlined text indicates that it is written in Classical Arabic, i.e. *fuSHa* when it is believed that the target language is *fuSHa*.

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as this *are* marked in the Latinized Arabic used by some students, which I will discuss in Chapter 7. The general lack of typographic creativity may be due to the recent introduction of the mobile phone in Sudan, or it may have to do with the writing system of the Arabic writing system itself, as I am unaware of truncated CMD forms for Arabic in other places. In English, which has a complicated orthography, omitting some letters, <goin> or <2moro> does not compromise the meaning of the message. Arabic is a more phonetic script, such that it may be hard to interpret with changed or omitted letters.

Beyond oral pronunciation is the use of words that are more frequently used in an oral context. A common feature is the use of the vocative *ya* 'Hey …' in (3.6) before the name of the person being addressed or the exclamation *wallahi* 'By God …' in (3.7). These are common features of Colloquial Sudanese Arabic and other Arabic dialects to call someone's attention or to direct a comment to a specific person.

(3.6) خلي بالك من نفسك يا عسل وترجعي بالسلامة
khalli balik min nafsik ya 'asal wa tarj'i bi-ssalaama
'Take care of yourself, hey honey, and come back safely in peace'

(3.7) والله مشتاقين موت بكره تعالى بدرى وجيبى معاك شيتات المورفولوجى
wallahi mushtaagiin muut bokra ta'al leey badrii wa jiibii ma'ak shiitaat al-murfulugi
'By God I miss you to death, come early tomorrow and bring with you the morphology sheets'

Another feature of Arabic-speaking populations is the frequent use of repetitive formulaic phrases, such as religious oaths, such as *al humdulillah, insha'allah, allah yibaarik fiik* etc. which are interjected casually into most oral discourse. Most or many of these proverbial expressions have responses specific to the initial expression, where the utterance is, turned back upon its original utterer. Fluent speakers of Arabic have these reciprocal phrases at hand for any appropriate occasion. Examples of such exchanges include: *mushtaagiin* 'You are missed' – *bil aktar* 'even more so'; *salaamtak* 'To your health' – *allah yasallimik* 'God save you'; *fursa sa'ida* 'It was a happy occasion' – *ana al as'ad* 'I'm the happier'; *kullo sana wa inta tayyib* 'Every year and you are well' – *wa inta tayyib* 'And you are well'. In discursive text messaging, reciprocal formulas are used as well. The following examples show how this communicative style is mirrored in the mobile phone.

(3.8) a يا رزاز حجيكم بكره في البيت
ya razaaz, Ha ajiikum bokra fil beet
'Hey Razaaz, I'm coming to your house tomorrow'
b ان يوم غدا لناظره بعد شوية
inna yoom ghadan li naaDHirahi ba'ad shwaya
'The person waiting for tomorrow will only wait shortly'

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(3.9) a البقاء لله يا ندوش
al bagha' lillah ya naduush
'Only God will survive, Naduush' (expression used for condolences)
B شكرا" ليك الله البقى
shukraan leek allah albgha
'Thank you, God, who survives, is on your side'

(3.10) a الاعزاء دائما مواقعهم حدقات العيون وانت عيونى
al-'aizaa' daa'iman muwaaqa'ihum Hadaqaat al 'ayuun, wa inta 'ayuuni
'Precious people their place is the eyelash, and you are my eyes'
b وانتى ايضا عيناي
wa inti aiDHan 'ainaay
'and you are my two eyes'

These examples, like the importance of returning calls immediately, reflect a cultural ethos of 'going with' the other person. It shows a preference for harmonious social relations, and language, while being vague or indirect is the means for cooperation, since individual desires are suppressed in favour of humoring the other.

Another feature of Arab communication is elaborateness, the tendency to use rich, expressive language forms (Feghali 1998). The use of exaggerated and overassertive speech is considered important, especially in 'regulating credibility' in interaction. What can be said simply in Western societies is expressed with more words in Arabic cultures. An appreciation for elaborate verbal style may help explain the lack of shortenings in text messages. As I described above, very few messages seemed to be tailored to the shortened SMS format, rather full syntax is used, as well as standard writing conventions if possible. Especially common in texting is the sending and receiving of poems or prose which, while usually about the length of one SMS, are written in elaborated literary or poetic style.

(3.11) تشرق عليك بالصحه والرضاء والسماح تستنتج عليك خيوط فرح مطرزه من نور صباحك ,واتمنى ليك طوت العمر
فى كل يوم أروع صباح ,أمس زمن الرساله جاءت انا كنت فى النوم
tashruq 'aleek bil-SaHa wa al-riDa' wa al-samaaH tistantij 'aleek khuyuuT faraH
muTaraza min nuur SebaaHik wa tamanna leek Tul al-'amur fi kul yoom arwa' SebaH
amis zaman al-risaala ja'at ana kunta fil nuum
'That the sun rises to you with health and consent and tolerance and weaves you like strings of happiness decorated by your morning sunlight, I hope to you a long life, every nice morning, yesterday when the message arrived I was sleeping'

The sending of one poem may anticipate the sending of a response poem, the reciprocal poetic exchange itself being important. There are, of course, slangy alternatives, such as *ween ya?* 'where you been?', so being elaborate is not the only way to communicate, but it may be, in part, due to the written context, as opposed to spoken communication, where formalities are flexible.

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From these and other data, it seems that Sudanese university students are not creating an impenetrable "youth code" as had been claimed for some European youth cultures. My initial impression is that oral writing style is motivated more by the 'imperative to communicate' than a trendy youth movement, while ideologies of literacy in Classical Arabic still claim a significant influence. However, that's part of the formula: the negotiation between practical elements and the instinct to express one's identity characterize all types of interactions, with behaviours occurring somewhere between the two extremes. Sudanese Colloquial Arabic is not formally a written medium, and so its use at all in a written context is marked as a deviation from what these students have been taught in education. SMS messaging may be the only context for writing this language. In this data, identity is expressed more in language choice and discursive elements, than with reduced typographic or syntactic features which brings me to the next area of analysis, the expression of identity in discourse.

Discursive identities

As socialinguists have worked to show, people use many strategies to construct inclusiveness in what they say to take into account whom is addressed, where they are as well as the function of the interaction be it informational, social, or practical. The position taken in this research is that *identity* is not a fixed permanent attribute, but a fluid, complex ever-changing notion, which is conditioned by the social context, i.e. identity is *relational* and emerges out of a *process of negotiation* (De Fina *et al.* 2006). Therefore, identity construction involves aligning oneself within a category for the inclusion or exclusion of self and others (see Antaki & Widicombe 1998 for Membership Categorization Analysis). Both social and discursive practices define or frame how people present themselves to others which entails that identity negotiation is situated in the discursive interaction but is also shaped by the extent to which meaning is shared. The degree to which shared knowledge schemas are drawn on categorizes a person within or outside of a community (physical or virtual). Research has emphasized the importance of different kinds of identities which are intertwined in use (De Fina *et al.* 2006). For example, we can study the "interactional" identity of the immediate discursive context, what Goffman (1981) calls doing "face" work, where one's "identity" might be the ephemeral role of a *caller* relating to an *answerer*, and in which case, socially appropriate inclusive greetings must ensue. This kind of identity illustrates the importance of cooperation in the way a speaker aligns himself with the interactant(s) in the current discourse and is often referred to as "footing" or alignment. Linguistic features of footing or alignment in oral speech are varied but include a number of performance devices such as voicing, alternations between dialogue and narration, pronoun switches, tempo, pitch, loudness,

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rhythm, all ways of signaling proximity or distance, "otherness" by communicating irony, surprise or sarcasm (De Fina 2006).

A second kind of analysis is that of "positioning" which attempts to understand "agency" as a process structured in part by historical, sociocultural forces (i.e. dominant discourses or ideologies). It concerns how speakers actively position themselves, with respect to these macrosocial forces and with respect to others. As young people opt for certain registers or dialects, names or pronouns over others, places and people are categorized. How young people represent themselves through language choice and use will reveal a lot about how inclusiveness is constructed in interaction, how ideologies of language build inclusiveness. These two theoretical constructs are useful and relevant for the current study as SMS communications among young people are dialogic, ongoing conversations, sites where both interactional (footings) and macrosocial identities (positionings) are negotiated through texts. Interactional features will tell how cooperative work is accomplished in SMS interaction, i.e. how a virtual community is constructed, and positioning will tell us how larger identity constructs are reflected and reinforced. For example, greeting sequences of SMSs are interesting as these are formulaic standards across known populations, but in their selection of terms of address are creatively tailored to individuals as well (Arminen & Leinonen 2006). As the examples (3.6, 3.8), above, illustrate, the use of the vocative *ya* 'Hey ….' followed by any label or name, signals both the type and direction of the speech act as well as range of relationships between the interactants depending on the label used. In the next section, I illustrate some of these concepts with data with particular concern for the way the two different registers, SCA and CA, are used. It will provide an introduction to the analytical techniques that will be used in Chapters 4 through 8.

Classical Arabic and Sudanese Colloquial Arabic in texting

The setting of this study involves the spoken Sudanese Colloquial Arabic (SCA) and the written language Classical Arabic (CA) in a diglossic situation, where the only official written language is Classical Arabic. In this data, however, as we saw above, SCA is written due to the informal SMS context, and the practical orientation of this medium. There is also a significant use of English and the Latinized script used for English and sometimes other languages in the data, French, Italian as well as languages normally written in other scripts e.g. Russian, Chinese. Classical Arabic, *fuSHa*, however, remains the standard for formal written communication outside this context and continues to be an important language in SMS. This array of linguistic choice makes for a complex dynamic within CMD as linguistic features of these languages, literacy capacities in them as well

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as ideological factors about language varieties and registers in electronic contexts all come into play.

As in most diglossic situations, the two languages are used according to distinct social registers or spheres of interaction. As we might expect, therefore, in most messages, we see CA being used for specific kinds of messages: religious quotations, some Arabic poetry, newspaper quotations, messages to doctors or professors. And, we see SCA being used for informal functions: direction giving, information exchange, greetings, coordination, as well as most affective, emotional exchanges between friends and relatives. Two prototypical examples:

Classical Arabic:

(3.12) اللهم مغفرة بلا عزاب وجنة بلا حساب ودعاء مستجاب وعام سعيد لكل الاحباب
allahuma maghfira bela ‘azaab wa janna bela Hisaab wa du‘a mustajaab wa ‘aam sa‘iid li kul al-aHbaab
‘May God give us forgiveness without torment of hell and paradise without penalty and accept our prayers. Happy years to all loved ones’

Sudanese Colloquial Arabic:

3.13) حولت ليك الرصيد
Hawalta leek al-raSiid
‘I sent you credit’

In reality, however, diglossia is not a neat situation, where two discreet registers exist, in clearly defined contexts. As Managan (2004) argues for French and Creole diglossia in Guadeloupe, French, the high register, is frequently used in informal and private situations and Creole, the low register, can occur in formal contexts such as the Church or the media. As is also true of oral situations, even though it is written, the text message provides for a range of formalities depending on the purpose and content of the message, and its intended recipient. Rather than presuming a binary distinction between a high register and a low register, it is preferable to consider “situations” (Blom & Gumperz 1972), which are functionally separate types of interaction. Situation types, such as the two examples above are associated with prototypical norms, but are highly permeable such that in any situation, regardless of formality, mixing or switching can occur. For example, the use of *fuSHa* in a message describing a meeting point in downtown Khartoum would be strange, and probably difficult for most people. However, the use of certain words from *fuSHa* or a “mixed code” variety of SCA and *fuSHa* within a single message, or message exchange would be common. This mixing may be due to bivalency where certain words equally belong to both registers, or aspects of personal style come in such as rhetorical effect. Therefore, it is better to talk about multiple levels of formality (i.e. different situations with

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respective norms of formality) as well as degrees of mixing at each level dependant on competency, function or acts of identity. The use of the two registers in Sudan and probably everywhere, therefore, can be better treated in a more nuanced theory of code-switching than the binary model of diglossia originally proposed by Ferguson (1959).

Code-switching, the use of alternate languages within one phrase, or stretch of talk, while having a complicated definitional history in the linguistics literature, is understood in sociocultural linguistics, as a contextualization strategy between speakers, namely for interactions, social alignments and identity, and cultural assumptions. Its definition is not limited to separate languages, but can apply to "alternate grammatical systems" or "subsytems" (Nilep 2006) including registers, dialects and varieties, as well as other languages, or even writing systems, as I will discuss in Chapter 7. Its definition can also be extended beyond code "alternations" and apply to cases where single words, phrases, expressions etc. are inserted into another language as a unidirectional process, "insertion". Insertion, following Auer's (1998) distinctions, seems to best apply to the most common switches into *fuSHa* in SCA, as very few, if any, of my informants are truly bilingual in *fuSHa*. Some alternations do occur since the texts are copied or written, in which case, the senders have more time to construct whole sentences or texts. Auer also makes a distinction between code-switching and code-mixing: switching indicates the insertion of words, phrases, expressions from another code which indicate a change of topic, function, expression, footing, or other change in the conversational context. In contrast, mixing refers to a sub-standard variety of language, or even register, that is created by the high frequency insertional mixing of two languages, and is meaningful as a whole dialect or register, as it is correlated with a social group. As I will illustrate, both types appear in the SMS data.

The example in (3.14) shows two words, 'sorry' and 'tired' insertional code-switches in *fuSHa* in place of more colloquial terms, in an otherwise SCA phrase. The code-switch may be the consequence of a need for politeness which can be expressed better in formal language, since the person is apologizing for not being able to come.

(3.14) كيف يا جدو عزرا ما حا افدر أجى الجامعه لأنى جاى من مشاوير كتيرة ومرهقه جدا
kef ya jiddu 'uzran ma Ha agdar aji al-jaam3a la'anni jaay min mashaawiir katiira wa murhiqa jiddan
'Hey Jiddu, *sorry* I won't be able to come to university because I'm coming from a long way and really *tired'*

In a counter example, Rashid, my research assistant, is answering Marwa, a female friend's message informing him about a flautist that will appear on TV

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that night. He responds with the following message written in *fuSHa* with a code-switch into SCA:

(3.15) شكرا على حسن المتابعه والسهره دى مهدا للرايعين
shukran ‘ala Husn al-mutaab‘a wa al-sahara di muhda lil-raay‘iin
‘Thanks for paying attention and tonight is dedicated to good people’

The use of *fuSHa* (underlined) for this message is unusual because it is a basic information exchange. The marked use of *fuSHa* is a language alternation, and an act of identity. As Rashid is demonstrating his ability in Classical Arabic, he identifies himself as a highly literate person. Rashid told me that he believes that Marwa is interested in him; so he responds flirtatiously by writing in *fuSHa*. The codeswitch of the adverbial time-phrase ‘and tonight’ into SCA grounds the larger phrase in a practical setting. It may be for personal affect, but more likely is that it was easier to write, or an unconscious frequency effect of common time-phrases, both explanations based in the current interaction.

In another example, the follow insertional mixing message is written in SCA, but the CA negative particle *la* ‘no’ occurs three times in place of the Sudanese *wala* ‘no’.

(3.16) لا رسالة ولا الو ولا علينا بتسالو اعملوا جرس والباقى نحنا بنكملو.
la risaala wa la alloo wa la ‘aliina bitas’aluu ‘amaluu jaras wa al-bagi niHna binkamiluu

‘No message and no hello and no asking after us, make a missed call and we’ll finish the rest’

The intention of this message is to lightly chide someone for not having kept in touch. By rendering this fairly functional message poetic, the sender manages to avoid sounding whiney, but rather wistful. The mixed-code in (3.16) is clever in that s/he manages to slightly de-personalize the message, by employing a poetic style, through the use of *fuSHa*. The sequence *la…la…la…* is a sort of idiomatic way of phrasing that is very formulaic. It allows the sender of this message to alter the tone of the message by formalizing it, whether or not s/he is capable in *fuSHa* or not. The use of ‘verbal routines’ (Androutsopoulos 2004) such as this arguably are one way that speakers project competence in Classical Arabic, without being able to spontaneously produce it. I will return in Chapter V, to a closely related phenomenon, where, rather than switching codified phrases such as the negation particles above, regular insertional mixing and the use of bivalent words, are used to create an elevated Sudanese register, which is commonly used for writing SMS poetry.

The use of SCA for greetings, proverbs and poetry of Sudanese origin is common, such as the following:

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(3.17) كل سنه ونتى طيبه والسنه الجيه عروس وناجحه يا عسل
kulu sana wa inti Tayyiba w al-sana jayyah ‘arus wa naajHa ya ‘asal
‘That every year you are well and next year you’ll marry and be successful honey’

Extremely pervasive in the message corpus, are messages written in *fuSHa* and then framed at the end with a greeting in Sudanese Arabic:

(3.18) كل عام والزين أعزهم يحتلون مخيلتي صدقا ووفاء او ودا (كل سنة وانتو طيبين)
kul ‘aam wa allaziina ai‘zahum yaHtaluuna mokhayalati SiDqan wa wafa’an aw wudan
(kulu sana wa intu Tayyibiin)
‘Every year the dearest people dominate my thoughts sincerely, loyally and lovingly
(That every year you are all well)’

This is a kind of code-switch signaled by a change of addressee, from an anonymous text to one directed at the receiver. The code-switch frames not only the type of interaction, since there is a functional switch to a greeting, but also the person’s identity, as a Sudanese person, with access to both CA and SCA. The purpose of the framed greeting is to appropriate and recontextualize the portion in *fuSHa* as meaningful to a speaker of Sudanese. The use of SCA serves to align the message with its recipient, a Sudanese person, a native speaker of SCA, and someone who has at least passive knowledge of *fuSHa*. It brings the formal text into the informal and makes it personal. Blom & Gumperz (1972) described a similar situation in a Norwegian community where greetings occurred in the local dialect but normal business transactions took place in the higher prestige standard dialect. The use of colloquial greetings served to establish confidentiality. Erving Goffman’s (1981) concept of “footing” is useful here, as footing refers to the stance a speaker takes with respect to his interactant, how he aligns himself relationally. While other strategies can accomplish footing in oral speech, such as pitch, volume, or rhythm, switching codes is a common way to cooperate in turn-taking, and align participants within the current interaction as well as position them both as Sudanese. I will discuss footing as a way to incorporate other voices and texts (intertextuality), through the personalization of poetic text messages in Chapter 5.

In addition to these two Arabic language registers, other languages have a role in the corpus of messages, whose usage can also be analyzed as marked acts of identity for some since these languages are not the language of standard interaction in Sudan. Following is an example of Egyptian Arabic:

(3.19) أخبارك ايه وأخبار العمل.
akhbaarak **eeh** akhbaar al-‘amal
‘How are you and how’s work?’

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It is not uncommon for young people to use phrases or words from other Arabic dialects such as *eeh* 'what' (3.19). Egyptian Arabic especially is known in the Arab world because Cairo has for a long time been the Hollywood of the Middle East, producing the most Arabic film, music and television.

English has had an important presence in Sudan since the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, but few people now, other than the highly educated, or students of English language and literature, speak English fluently. Nonetheless, it figures in the data; for most, not as a second language but similar to the uses of *fuSHa*, as a resource which is used in the main language, SCA, serving to refer to or index aspects of English-speaking culture. In addition to established borrowings, which are incorporated into the grammar of Arabic, it is common to find insertional switching and mixing of idioms, phrases or words. I will discuss the globalization of the English language in the Sudanese context in much greater depth in Chapter 7. In the data, I also found texts written in Chinese, Russian, Italian, and French. The presence of other languages in this data set is due to the fact that one group of my informants were students of linguistics. These students also had the option of studying specific languages and literatures. Their use of these languages is informal, between friends from the same course. It is a clear marker of intimacy, and would be difficult to argue that its use is based in need. One feature worth mentioning is that the use of the language in the initial message usually prompts the use of the same language in the response. This is an interactional feature, Auer (1998) pointed out the likelihood of maintaining the same language across turns, however, there seems to be a lot of conscientious language play among these students, which goes beyond practical expression. This stylistic play is carried into writing languages as both Arabic scripts and Latinized scripts figure in the data, topics which I treat in detail in Chapter 7.

Space for alternative identities

As I have attempted to illustrate in this chapter, CMD is socially embedded, not an autonomous system of computing skills but emerges from local situations with specific cultural systems as speakers opt for certain forms in interaction to relate to other speakers with shared cultural knowledge schemas. As Ito & Okabe (2005: 4) argue, the specific social and cultural impact of this information technology is locally based and influenced by existing power structures. Text messaging practices they say are "structured by institutional and cross-generational surrounds", emphasizing the importance of the "power geometries" of place in addition to immediate social relations. Text-messaging, therefore, reflects identities drawn from the norms of Arabic-speaking cultures within a Muslim environment: the importance of affectiveness, the indirect and verbally elaborate style of high-context cultures, and the importance of 'keeping in touch', a feature of

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collectivist culture. In addition, as the semi-oral style, the text message shows features of Sudanese oral speech: the use of Sudanese expressions and intonation and the switching and mixing of Classical Arabic with Sudanese Colloquial Arabic. Such features are indicative of a community of people defined by both their common identity as urban Northern Sudanese and by their larger Arab-Islamic orientation.

However, it was hypothesized in the Introduction, that different types of "community" are constructed and people can assert membership via linguistic acts of identification with such a communities, possibly in combination with other personal attributes, e.g. clothing style, religiosity, political orientation etc. As discussed above, identity is a relational concept, based on who we're interacting with and whether that person belongs to the same community, i.e. whether there is a sense of inclusiveness. In addition to its function as a continuation of Sudanese conversational style, texting likely exhibits various subcultural patterns which diverge from the cultural mainstream, such as the discursive intimacy of university-age peers, the social-historical forces of ethnic origin and ideologies of languages and literacy. In the next four chapters, which constitute the main analytical contribution of this thesis, I will use the tools of conversation and discourse analysis introduced here to show how people negotiate a range of affiliations, alignments and identities, in subtle ways, through text messaging and phone use in general, in combination with ethnographic data.

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4

Nuba and urban identity: The discourse of resistance and the practice of integration

(4) صباح الخير وامانى كتيييييرة مايتعد وبوابه شوق محال تسند يانوباوى
SebaaH al-khair wa amaani katiiiiiira ma yit'ad wa bawaabat shuuq muHaal tisned ya nuubaawii

'Good morning, I have so much hope, it can't be measured, and the door of missing is impossible to shut, you Nuba (person)'

Joseph's story

Joseph Kuku, a 23 year-old student at the University of Khartoum, was the recipient of the above text message sent by Intesar, a female friend at Sudan University. Joseph and Intesar knew each other from childhood. They are Krongo[1], one of over fifty "tribes" from the Nuba Mountains, but both grew up in Dongola and later moved to Khartoum for university. Intesar's poem is framed by the vocative *ya nuubaawii* 'you Nuba (person)', which signals their in-group alignment, both as people coming from *jibaal al-nuuba,* the Nuba Mountains, a label which also indexes their ethnic identity as Black African. Interestingly, she uses the word *nuubaawii* 'Nuba person', referencing the entire Nuba region, instead of *krongawi* 'person from Krongo tribe' which would more accurately capture their shared tribal identity. However, such regional appellations, e.g. *shimaaliyyiin* 'Northerners', *gharbaawiyyiin* 'Westerners' or *januubiyyiin* 'Southerners' are common ways that people in Khartoum broadly differentiate themselves into ethnic categories. Nuba people sometimes say they are from South Kordofan province, an ambiguous label which could mean Arab or Nuba.

[1] Krongo is an existing Nuba ethnic group, but not the actual ethnic group of Joseph and Intisar. I have used it to protect their identities.

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Intesar's flirtatious use of the term *nuubaawii*, is an example of positioning. She indicates the dual identity she is claiming for herself and for Joseph, both as a person with Nuba origins, but also, that of an outsider, by assigning their origins in an undifferentiated way to an entire region. These kinds of contradictions seem to characterize the problem of ethnic identity in Khartoum, where some such as the Nuba claim tribal or regional affiliations on a sliding scale, as a resource more than permanent structural attribute.

Joseph is a fourth year student in linguistics at the University of Khartoum. Although he was born in Argo, Northern Sudan, his family is all Krongo, and his maternal tongue is Krongo as well. He later learned Arabic and English at school. He says that speaking Krongo is easiest for him, then Arabic, but really he prefers speaking English. For his Bachelor's thesis he is documenting an aspect of Krongo grammar, and is interested in possibly working to standardize the language. His uncle is active in promoting the learning of Nuba languages in the Nuba Mountains and runs a language center in Omdurman offering basic language courses and literacy materials in a number of Nuba Mountain languages.

Joseph is active in student life: he attends class and plays football during the day and studies in the evening. He is a member of the University's student Nuba Association and SPLM Association. He is also the General Secretary for an intra-university student NGO, the Krongo Charity Organization for Properity and Development, and for the past four years in Khartoum has lived alone in a studio above the KCOPD office. He says that he prefers living alone so that he can focus on his studies. As I had been interested in the use of Nuba languages used in texting, I was introduced to Joseph specifically because of his Nuba connections on campus. After he agreed to participate in my research and to help me find contacts, we took a walk through the University campus together and collected his friends, mostly a group of politically-minded young men with origins in the Nuba Mountains but also from Darfur and Southern Sudan. Joseph Kuku, not coincidentally, was named after Yusuf Kuwa Makki, the former commander of the SPLA's rebellion in the Nuba Mountains. Although this group's common language was Arabic, most of them spoke English well, and claimed to prefer it to Arabic. One of them from the Ghulfan tribe "hates" that he had to learn Arabic, although he speaks it best. Most also claimed an ability to speak the language of their tribe, Heiban, Ghulfan, Temein, Nyimang, Katcha etc. although I later learned that for some, this meant only a few words. These young men were enthusiastic participants in my research, however, because I was interested in them and their languages, as people from the Nuba Mountains. They were proud of their non-Arab origins and some of them even politically active with the student SPLM group at the university.

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Joseph's course of study, his friends, and political activities and language choices all indicate a specific anti-Arab ideological orientation. In his own words, when asked about whom he might marry in the future, he answered that he could not marry into an Arab tribe, "I don't like them", and if he did, his family would reject her and isolate him. In spite of this, Joseph has no problem having Arab friends. Like Intesar's message above, these young Nuba students are drawing a boundary between themselves and the "Arab" mainstream, in spite of having spent most of or all of their lives outside the Nuba Mountains. Since they come from different tribes, different parts of Sudan and speak different languages, their common ground is their ethnic identification and anti-Arab sentiment. Their immediate networks reflect high ethnic diversity, showing urban linkages as being equal to or more important than tribal ones. However, the concept of Nuba-ness remains an important identity construct, one which shapes the way urban networks are formed. This ideological position stands in contrast to some practices, however, as they participate in mainstream urban life as any Arab would, speak Arabic fluently (even writing poetry which I discuss in Chapter 5), appreciate popular music and are Muslim. And while making claims to native language fluency, none of them use this language in their SMS interactions. Joseph is proud to be Nuba, keeps in touch with his relations in the Nuba Mountains, speaks Krongo fluently, but neither he nor his network uses this language in texting. In his words, "you won't find anyone writing in his own language".

This chapter reveals the mobile phone, not as a discursive tool opening up new spaces of Nuba connectivity, but a kind of theater which perpetuates the Discourse of a "Nuba identity", but mostly serving as an instrument for the practice of integration. In Chapter 2, I summarized the developments that have lead to such a sharp division between "Arabs" and the rest, the socio-economic power that specific Arab tribes have maintained in the "Center" of Sudan vs. the marginalized "Periphery". This imbalance has led to successive civil wars between the North and South, the latest one involving the Nuba Mountains as a battleground of ideologies as well as a literal battlefield, which forced the majority of its population to migrate to other cities in Sudan or abroad. I first discuss how these events played out with respect to the Nuba Mountains in particular. Through ARABIZATION and ISLAMIZATION programs, the Khartoum Government forced some of the Nuba people into a defensive position. Where Arabization and Islamization were natural processes in the past, their enforcement created the resistance that the Government sought to prevent through integration measures. International humanitarian Discourse has similarly sharpened the ethnic and racial distinctions by applauding the Nuba resistance and educated Nuba have seized and perpetuated this Discourse. I then present two cases, which

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illustrate language use which contradicts ideology, one of them exemplifying how the Discourse of the Nuba influenced my own data collection. The main story I present here is that of the children of migrants, and an example of such contradictions; a heightened awareness of a Nuba ethnic identity accompanies an urban life, modeled on the dominant culture of the "Center", in which making money and improving one's quality of life may depend on one's ability to integrate. I lastly argue that such a contradiction is better seen a strategy, where ethnic identity is a flexible notion, which young Nuba people employ in certain contexts.

The "Nuba problem": Discourses of othering

The Nuba problem is not unique among Sudan's conflicts, all of which emerge from the tension between political incorporation into the state and the maintenance of "ethnic identity"[2]. What is unique about the people living in the Nuba Mountains, and problematic for the Arab-Islamic Government, is their great internal diversity. While the region poses a challenge for Sudan's vision of cultural and national unity, Arabic has nonetheless been the lingua franca in the past. However, current dynamics in the Nuba Mountains are poorly understood due to its being closed off to the world for over a decade. For those people of Nuba origin living in Khartoum, the forces of "resistance" vs. "integration" posed by Sharkey (2008) (see Chapter 2) are poignant and surface daily in the lives of the Nuba students I encountered at the University of Khartoum.

The origin of the term "Nuba" is unknown although it was used by Arabs and later the British. It is not the label the people living in these mountains used for themselves in the past (Stevenson 1984), nor that of a single ethnic group. It is a term that came into use recently by the Nuba. It is used here to refer to any non-Arab inhabitant of the regional area of the Nuba Mountains. Although all Black Africans, the various Nuba groups living there have historical connections to Nilotic peoples from the South, Nubians from the North, Daju people from Darfur and Chad among others. They speak around 45 distinct languages representing two of Africa's major language families, Nilo-Saharan and the Kordofanian branch of Niger-Congo (Schadeberg & Thelwall 1983) in addition to dialects of Arabic spoken there by Baggara and *Jellaba*. Nuba history is mostly defined by regional similarities: small groups living in communities in separated valleys. The region is situated in the geographic center of the country, politically incor-

[2] "Ethnic identity" here refers to self-identification with or belonging to a particular group based on shared values, culture, religion, language, kinship and place of origin.

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porated with the North, but bordering and partly controlled by the SPLA in the South.

The British colonialists were uncertain how to categorize the region in terms of educational policies, whether to encourage the Arabization of the area as an acceptable mode of progress or to cultivate an indigenous culture, such as they had envisioned for the South. In the 1920s recognizing that more communities in the northern part of the Mountains were Islamized, they created an artificial division between the Arab/Islamic areas and the rest (Sanderson 1963). While Islam has existed in the Nuba Mountains since the 16th century, its practices and customs have been integrated locally, which, in many areas of life are indistinguishable from Christian and Animist practices (Saeed 2001). For the northern areas *khalwa* 'Quranic schools' were allowed to remain, while in the southern part, Christian missions were accepted although education policies in the latter were confused because ducators had difficulty identifying common cultural practices in the Nuba Mountains to model their lessons on.

The British, through missionary work, envisioned a "Nuba Renaissance" (Willis 2003), a term used by Angus Gillan, the Governor of South Kordofan, to refer to a revival of the "Nuba culture" and "rigorous observance of ancient traditions". They had the romantic idea of cultivating Nuba traditions by merging them with Christian moral enlightenment, in order to preserve them from the influence of Arabs. But they erred in treating the Nuba as an undifferentiated, "primitive", "other" and therefore failed to recognize the diversity of practices, beliefs and strategies present in the region. The early missions failed to find pupils and hence a community of Church-goers, which prompted the Government officials to advocate for Arabic training, jointly for both southern and northern Nuba children, although there was much concern that "Nuba culture" would be threatened by this contact. Therefore, in 1938, anthropologist Siegfried Nadel was brought in by the British to conduct an ethnography of the Nuba area. He concluded, "Notwithstanding the racial, ethnic and linguistic diversity of the Nuba hill tribes, there exists something like a 'Nuba culture'" (Nadel 1947). Other ethnographers, such as Baumann (1987) and linguist Roland Stevenson (1984) found strong cultural traits within certain regions, among certain groups, but did not make claims to a larger Nuba unity. Stevenson, responding to Nadel, said, "It is only very recently, with increased contacts all over the hills, that some sense of a common 'Nuba-ness' has developed." Therefore, attributing a simple uniformity to such a region would be a gross oversight. However, this is what the British and the Missions did, and failing to find a common "tradition" to build their Christian foundation on, they turned to educational policies used for Arab Northerners, but managed under the "moral supervision" of the Church, leaving a

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very confused legacy and artificial cultural divisions between people in the Nuba Mountains.

After independence, however, the Sudanese Government pursued rigorous ISLAMIZATION there. Mosques were built, Arabic language was taught in schools, and students in Nuba schools were forced to attend Islamic training in Khartoum or Cairo. Many students were also forced to change their names to Islamic ones (Salih 1989). Commander Yusuf Kuwa Makki, a Nuba Muslim and SPLM/A Governor of South Kordofan, said that he grew up thinking he was Arab until he came into political consciousness and joined the SPLA (Winter 2000). In fact, his coming across Nadel's Monograph, "The Nuba" at the University of Khartoum changed the way he thought about himself, as part of a unity with internal structure (Jedrej 2006).

In 1992, the Sudanese Government authorized the use of military force against the Nuba people in what they called a *jihad* or *"*holy war" in spite of the presence of Muslims there (de Waal & Abdel Salam 2004). Because the SPLA was using the Nuba Mountains as a base for their operations, the Government's rationale was that all Nuba, even Muslims in SPLA controlled areas were not true Muslims, were apostates of Islam. Rebellion against the Sudanese Government was seen as anti-Islamic (*Ibid.*) and all of its inhabitants, regardless of ethnic or religious background were the Government's common enemies. The SPLA and the international community has termed the *jihad* an "ethnic genocide" because many people were killed, or separated from their families and relocated to so-called "peace villages" where they were inculcated as Arabs and Muslims. The men either escaped to other parts of Sudan or abroad, joined either the SPLA or even the Sudanese Army, and the women left behind were forced to leave their land. The SPLA believe that this forced fragmentation of the Nuba family was not a side-effect of the civil war but a planned aspect of it, in order to dissolve the families of these people, and therefore their cultures (*Ibid.*).

Through the release of Julie Flint's documentary in 1995, "The Nuba: Sudan's Secret War", events in the Nuba Mountains were made known to the international community. In reaction, the SPLA/M supported by the international media forged a Discourse which made reference to the genocide of the "Nuba People" and the notion of a "Nuba identity" echoing the early categories of the British. Indeed, the SPLA's concentration, Yusuf Kuwwa Makki says, besides the military has been on strengthening people's identification as Nuba. NGOs such as African Rights, Africa Watch, the Nuba Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Society (NRRDS) and the Nuba Mountains Solidarity Abroad (NMSA), have done a lot to promote this image. Now, a number of websites (e.g. www.nubasurvival.com) and the recent book, "Proud to be Nuba", continue to emphasize this shared cultural identity. In spite of its multiple religions, langu-

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ages and ethnic groups, the development community's discourse has subverted the high diversity there in favour of a common Nuba identity. We see how the Nuba have been simplified into a single ethnic category by at least three dominant actors, the British colonialists, the Sudanese Government and international humanitarian organizations, but these Discourses may not hold up on the ground.

On becoming "Arab"

As I explained in Chapter 2, for the Sudanese, being "Arab" is extremely complex, as internal definitions of what it means to be Arab differ from external ones and ethnic identifications often become complicated with linguistic and religious ones. Outside Sudan, in the wider Arab world, even Sudanese "Arabs" are called *suadna* 'black' in Libya, or even such derogatory labels as '*abeed* 'slaves' in Gulf states, or *fusduq al-abeed* 'slaves' peanuts' referring to Sudan's agricultural product, the groundnut. Inside Sudan "Black" is not a useful label, since skin tone is highly variable, with the exception of some particularly dark people from the South or Darfur areas who are derogatively referred to as *zurga* 'blue'. In the urban setting, since large-scale migration began during slavery, there has been a mixing of ethnic groups rendering color designations social rather than physical labels. Arabization also has occurred when non-Arab groups such as the Fur and Fulani acquired cattle, adopted the lifestyle and intermarried with the Baggara Arabs (de Waal 2004; Sharkey 2008). This flexibility of ethnic identity is precisely what makes the Sudanese case so interesting, as people, knowing that by being Muslim and speaking Arabic, can nominally assimilate into an Arab ethnicity (Nyombe 1994; Sharkey 2008). Ranger's (1983) phrase, the "invention of tradition", aptly characterizes the flexibility of "tradition" in the ways that people in the Sudan have capitalized and continue to capitalize on the Arab identity. Adopting a Muslim name means assimilating into an Arab genealogy, where descent can be claimed from Arabia, and a new Islamic history can be "invented" for oneself.

In a similar story, it would be incorrect to say that the Nuba were peaceably living in a "traditional" African way, isolated from the Arab-Muslim mainstream before independence. Some scholars say that Nuba history is defined since the 16th century by its people's interactions with slave-raiding Arab nomads (Baumann 1987; Manger 2001). In the 19th century, Arabization had a differential effect on Nuba villages, having a greater impact in communities centralized under chiefs that converted to Islam for political prestige or as a strategy to protect against slave-raiding (Manger 2001; Saeed 2001). However, during Mahdist and British control, these antagonisms were pacified and with increased trade and contact with Arabs, many Nuba converted to Islam and adopted Arabic to interact with traders and merchants. The British "Nuba Policy", which at-

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tempted to protect the Nuba from the Arab cultural incursion and allow them to independently achieve agricultural and economic growth, entailed a policy of isolation, which, contradictorily, prevented the Nuba from access to that growth, which lay in Arab communities in the plains. The result was the labour migration of Nuba men out of the region. In an Arab-dominated state, it was simply more advantageous to be functioning as an Arab would. The British, not the Nuba were proponents of an isolated Nuba region and may be the originators of such an idea of regional solidarity, while the Nuba may have been pragmatically becoming Arab, both processes "inventing tradition".

Following independence, and as the country took on a national character, which included for some nationalists, elements of Sudanese culture mixed with Arab-Islamic ones, the concept of Sudanism rather than Arabism became important. The related term Sudanization is used by some scholars (Doornbos 1988; Abusabib 2004) as an alternative to Arabization since actual assimilation processes reveal that Peripheries are gradually adopting the elite lifestyle of the Center, itself modeled on Arab-Islamic culture, but nonetheless a *Sudanese* culture. Abusabib (2004) questions the viability of the term Arabization as an overwhelming assimilative process, preferring Sudanization, "as a process 'from below'" reflecting cultural relations between people in the Nile Valley based on historical continuity. In the past, the Nuba were actually part of a political system where local "chiefs" paid tribute to the regional mek in Dilling, who in turn had a subordinate relation to the Funj Sultan in Sennar (Jedrej 2006). This shows that while the Nuba region was subordinate to this Sultanate they were not independent of them, an uncivilized band of barbarians, but involved in a complex network of hierarchical relations, internally and externally. Sudanization, therefore, is a more appropriate concept in the current study since the Nuba people do not claim to be Arabs, but nonetheless are to some extent emulating the Arab-styled elite culture, as well as using the dominant structures to various ends, some of them, to define a new kind of ethnic identity, Nuba-ness, which I will discuss below. This perspective better allows for the agency of Nuba people to make do within the dominant culture.

Research question revisited

The Nuba students with whom I worked are influenced by the complex of influences presented above, where at least several discourses are vying to define the Nuba situation: the Sudanese Government's forced integration scheme and the SPLA/M and international community's emphasis on the "Nuba identity" which contradicts many of the existing strategies of integration (i.e. Sudanization) being practiced for a long time by Nuba people.

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The Nuba people I knew were living in Greater Khartoum, where the Peripheries merge with the Center, and social inequality is heightened due to confrontations over shared space. Most migrants arrived in the early 1980s as drought, insecurity and civil war drove people north, and in 1988 Nuba migrants and Southerners more than doubled the population of Khartoum from 1.5 million to over 3 million (Miller & Abu-Manga 1992). Many Nuba continue to live in shantytowns or camps on the outskirts of Greater Khartoum, areas with poor infrastructure, low incomes and high unemployment, poor healthcare and crime. They are also areas of social exclusion where people coming from there are subject to forms of racism. Given such a situation, I had hypothesized that such marginalization would provoke resistance. In Chapter 1, I explained my original research question as an investigation of a "Nuba resistance" through language use in text messaging, which I thought might be a way of subverting the Government's integration scheme. On the other hand, the grievances experienced by the Nuba happened close to twenty years ago, to the previous generation, which may mean that these young people would simply want to make the best of their lives by participating in the socio-economic mainstream and adopting the Sudanese lifestyle. That I did not find a correlation between language use in text-messaging supports the latter notion although SMS use is certainly not a determining factor. However, the story is not so simple, and moves beyond the text-message.

In the next two sections, I present two additional cases (to add to Joseph's story at the start of this chapter) and several kinds of data: actual language use compared with attitudes and declarations about language use and ethnicity, and some details about the social networks of the people involved. The first case also illustrates an important lesson in methodology as it concerns working with such topics of ethnicity and identity.

Lessons in methodology: The Karko students

I first made Nuba contacts through my research assistant, Imen, who herself had been researching changing marriage customs among Karko, a Nuba Mountains ethnic group near Dilling. She had come into contact with Wakeel Jowban, a student at Nileen University, and member of a Nuba student organization, who was enthusiastic about the project and recruited five other Karko students to participate.

They were different from Joseph's group described earlier because they were all from the Karko village and native speakers of Karko who had moved to Khartoum in the last few years for study. While they each claim a handful of relatives still in Karko (3 to 5 people), most of their extended families have left and settled in El Obeid, Port Sudan or Khartoum. All of them live with their relatives in Omdurman (Greater Khartoum) and all of them are Muslims with

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Arab names in addition to a Karko family name. For example, Ekhlas Basha Mahmoud carries an Arab personal name and the name of her father and grandfather, but her Karko family name is Tenna, which is not used formally. Wakeel still carries his father's Karko name Jowban, which may mean that Islamic conversion happened more recently in his family. Hamdan Beshir is called Kejal by his Nuba friends, an in-group acknowledgement of his Karko nickname. Wakeel, addressing Hamdan in a text message written in Karko:

(4.1) kegal aogo tandshre
'Kejal, will you come?'

Wakeel's group was pleased that I had taken an interest in their language and were eager to teach me some of the greetings and sounds they use that Arabic did not have. We discussed how writing in Karko would be, which sounds would correspond with which letters. All but two expressed that writing their language with English letters is easier than Arabic letters. In answer to my question about whether they write text messages in their language, most of them responded that they did. I had hoped to find such a practice, as this suggested that the language, being written down, had an important status for the Karko, as standardized writing is the first step in legitimating a language. Indeed, when Imen referred to Karko as *rotana* 'dialect', Wakeel, one of the Karko students, corrected her saying *ma rotana, logha* 'not a dialect, a language' revealing his attitude and awareness of the political distinction between a "dialect" and a "language". A dialect is a language without official status; it is defined in relation to standardized, accepted languages. Joseph, even though a linguist, and well-aware of the fact that his language, Krongo, is a fully functional language, nonetheless refers to it as *rotana* 'dialect' as do most all Nuba that I worked with, a habit which contrasts with many of their political views, but shows that they acknowledge the inferior status of their languages.

According to my initial methodology, I gave each of Wakeel's group a notebook and instructions for keeping a journal of their SMSs for a one-week period. After the week, they returned with very little data, around 4 to 10 messages each, all of it in Karko language, mostly written in Latin alphabet. I was surprised to not find any messages in Arabic at all and it quickly became apparent that they had omitted these for the purpose of my exercise. They certainly must have had connections outside of this small group but they had included only the messages that were written to each other, which seemed highly unnatural. For the second attempt, I asked them to include all messages in any language and script, which they did. After another couple weeks, I collected their notebooks again, and found that most were writing in Arabic, two used some English as well, but

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almost no messages written in Karko that were exchanged with someone outside that group. There were a couple of messages between Ekhlas and her brother in Karko but none that predated our first meeting. Therefore I consider the natural use of Karko here very dubious. An example of the type of data they presented to me is an exchange between Wakeel and Ekhlas:

(4.2) king jainjarro
'Good morning'

(4.3) cangngro olo gola shor
'Good morning, today where are you going?'

In the messages between Wakeel and Ekhlas, the way they use very different transcriptions for 'Good morning', Wakeel using <k> for the (k) sound, <j> for the (ʤ) sound while Ekhlas uses <c> for the (k) sound and <g> for the (ʤ) sound respectively. No consistent code was used, no in-group conventions. That they mostly wrote Karko within the group of six people, that the messages were limited in content, mostly greetings, and arrangements, and that there were no consistencies in spelling made it clear that the students had started writing in Karko for the purpose of working with me. It was not a pre-existing practice among them. They had seen that I was interested in their writing in Karko, and, from what I understand wanted to present this to me and furthermore seemed to enjoy the exercise very much.

Although I was disappointed at the time, both for my error in setting up a faulty research method, but also because I simply did not find what I hoped, I later came to understand the value of this episode. On the one hand, as a researcher I needed to be particularly careful about how I describe the aims of my research. In this case by overemphasizing their Nuba-ness, erring by expressing the same righteous enthusiasm that the 'Discourse of resistance' emerged from, I influenced the people with whom I should be most neutral. Although I did not necessarily expect to find Nuba people endorsing the use of their language much, I nonetheless used this to relate to them personally in the research setting, which worked, but did not yield accurate text-message data. On the other hand, the data was telling in another way, that the image these students wanted to show me was one of cultural integrity. They expressed pride in being Nuba and a natural expression of this would be to use their language with each other, and while some of them continue to use it in the home, alongside Arabic, I suspect that no one with this level of integration into the Arab cultural life, uses it in writing. For many Nuba communities, the importance of their language is even more diminished, as even within families, Arabic is the lingua franca inter-generationally. I describe a second case, below where this was the situation.

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The Krongo picnic

I accompanied Joseph Kuku to the Krongo student charity organization's picnic in the *ghabba* 'jungle' alongside the White Nile. Following custom at large Sudanese gatherings, the men sat on one side and the women on the other, with little mixing of the two groups. The men were served drinks and food first, followed by the women. In my conversations with some of the girls, they expressed disdain that the groups should be separated, since the day was about meeting people and having fun. Joseph, as the organization's secretary, knew most people, moved around socializing, and was the emcee for the talent show part of the day. For this they set up a microphone and sound system, and very formally, Joseph, speaking *fuSHa*, greeted and introduced everyone. Each participant, in turn, took the microphone and speaking *fuSHa*, began each a round of thanks with *bismillaah al-raHman al-raHim* 'In the name of God the gracious and merciful', a standard Arabic expression often preceding speeches. Some poetry was recited which spoke of the Krongo people, although it was recited in Arabic. With the exception of two songs sung in Krongo language, the whole event took place in either Sudanese or *fuSHa* Arabic. All the attendees were Muslim, some having converted after moving to Khartoum, but all were there to celebrate their shared ethnic heritage. I spoke with three young Krongo women there, one of whom could speak Krongo, while the other two had passive knowledge of it. This was a source of frustration for one them, *bafham laakin ma talla'* 'I understand but it doesn't come out!' since her parents didn't speak it to her in childhood. None of them had grown up in the Nuba Mountains and two of them had boyfriends from non-Nuba tribes. One of them said that this might be a problem for her parents, but for her and her friends this was no issue.

I also spoke with an instructor at Omdurman Islamic University nicknamed Ustaaz 'teacher'. He was fully fluent in Krongo, and one of the few people who knew how to write it, although, he said, he had never written a text-message in it. Missionaries had standardized an orthography for it and several other of the languages in Nuba Mountains but these writing systems were not in widespread use. Even Moro, he said, the most organized tribe in terms of language revitalization, in his knowledge, would not use Moro in text-messaging. Krongo is near Kadugli in the southern SPLA-controlled part of the Nuba Mountains, a place where Islam and Christianity co-exist, but politically it is governed by the South. English language is taught in early education there by Kenyan instructors. It is also the site of one of the first successful Christian missions in the Nuba area (Willis 2003) which has left a significant community of Christians. In spite of such a confluence of factors, Arabic remains the common language among them. Additionally, the cultural style of formal meetings, the use of *fuSHa* and the

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separation of genders, are all features of the dominant Arab-Muslim Sudanese culture.

As the two cases above demonstrate, as well as that of Joseph's group, Arabic is clearly the common medium of interaction among young people even within the same ethno-linguistic group. In the case of Karko, while they are all fluent speakers of the language and speak it among themselves, they do not use it in written form. Younger generations of Nuba people who do not grow up in the Mountains do not all speak the language, making Arabic the language of inter-generational communication. These stories support the studies of sociolinguists on minority languages in Khartoum that young people are the catalyst for language shift in communities. According to Mugaddam's (2006) survey of migrant speakers of 14 language groups in Khartoum there was a consistent decline in mother tongue retention among younger generations compared with adults across most groups and the Nuba Mountains languages exhibited some of the highest rates of language proficiency loss to Arabic. Bilingualism in Arabic has been already been necessary for Nuba inter-group interactions in the Mountains for a long time. Mother languages are also used in fewer domains; Arabic is often used even in interactions with relatives and situations where all participants can speak the ethnic language. Arabic dominates all aspects of young urban life e.g., education, workplace, markets etc. which makes mastery of Arabic extremely important for potential economic success as well as providing the social benefits of participating in the modern, educated mainstream life of Sudan. According to Mugaddam, the use of local languages no longer has any clear pragmatic function and is used only symbolically. These practices contradict what many of these students claim about their language use and ability, showing that these young people are sensitive to the loss of their cultural integrity, and at least towards me, a foreign researcher interested in their language and culture, exhibit pride in being Nuba.

Paths of acculturation: Contradiction of ideology and practice

All of the students presented here are active in Nuba student associations, identify themselves as Nuba, and share the idea that Nuba languages and cultures should not be assimilated into Arabic culture. Nonetheless, these ideas of resistance fail in practice, at least, as it concerns the overwhelming use of Arabic. Beyond Arabic, however, the students differ in their opinions about, and practices of social integration, as well their visions for the future.

Across the individuals in these two cases, and from those in the story of Joseph's group at the opening of this chapter, we seed a wide range of approaches to being Nuba in the city. Wakeel has lived in Khartoum for ten years, but his close friends are all Nuba. After finishing his studies in accounting he will

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return to Karko village and is interested in working to develop it. According to Imen, Wakeel does not speak Arabic in the same way as the others, perhaps having learned it late, a significant factor in his socialization. Hamdan, like Wakeel was born and raised in Karko, but nevertheless decided to learn English a few years ago at the Evangelical Evening Institute in Khartoum. He has many friends from many tribes with whom he meets daily for *fatur* 'breakfast'. He imagines traveling outside Sudan before returning to the Nuba Mountains to be a modern farmer. When asked how important it was to know your friends' tribes, Hamdan told me that in the city it was not so important, that you may have friends and not know their exact tribe for a while. Joseph grew up in Dongola, in the North, has been in Khartoum for five years, but when I asked where he was from he first said the Nuba Mountains in spite of never living there. Later, when asked where he felt that "home" was, he said Dongola. He has friends from many tribes, but states that he does not like Arabs in spite of socializing with them. Most of his close friends such as Baha are from the Nuba Mountains, but not necessarily his own tribe. Baha, like Joseph, dreams of "returning" to the Mountains although he's also never lived there. He went to his village, Ghulfan, in Nuba Mountains while I knew him. He was gone for one month and sent me messages from there saying there were no jobs, and a war, making reference to the last war over a decade ago, in which his grandfather had been killed. There was, in fact, no new war, and his representation was exaggerated although there was a conflict about water. That was the second time Baha had been to the *balad* "homeland"; nonetheless most of his network are people from Ghulfan who have settled in Khartoum, or other students like Joseph, with Nuba origins.

While acculturation is individual, there are, however, some patterns apply across groups. The Karko men and women differed in several ways as did the Krongo women and Joseph's group. One is that many of the men from both groups spoke English fairly well or at least understand it while none of the girls from either group knew it at all. My interaction with them warmed considerably when I spoke Arabic, but the Karko girls' answers tended to be short and unelaborated. The Karko girls also wore a conservative veiling style, covering all the hair while the Krongo veiled loosely showing their hair. All the girls used skin lightening products. According to Fabos (2008), the use of skin bleach is one way that Sudanese women buy into an Arab-Islamic identity, imitating the dominant aesthetic of beauty in Sudan, modeled on lighter-skinned Arabs. The Karko declared the importance of marrying a man from Karko, that someone from an outside tribe would not be acceptable. In contrast, the Krongo girls were open to marrying outside the tribe. In an examination of their mobile phone contact lists, it turned out that the Karko women were mostly in touch with relatives from the same tribe (30-50 contacts), most of whom were living in

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Omdurman or Khartoum, compared with the Krongo women with a number of friends and contacts from other tribes. Joseph's group's contacts revealed a more mixed social network, socializing within and also outside of tribe relations than the Karko men, with the exception of Hamdan.

The Karko students who came from the Nuba Mountains all spoke their language fluently. Consequently they maintain closer links with this community. It seems that the Karko group's contact network emerges out of natural kin and tribe relations carried into Khartoum from Karko village. In contrast, the group that I met through Joseph, were more politically active, had more mixed friendship networks, most of whom were also Nuba, but not necessarily the same tribe, having met only in Khartoum at University through student associations. This latter group, as I mentioned earlier, were generally poor speakers of their maternal languages and had grown up outside of the Nuba Mountains. Their friendships were forged from Nuba solidarity it would seem, rather than cultural ties.

In a study of ethnic identity and acculturation patterns, Phinney *et al*. (2001) found that, "In the face of real or perceived hostility toward immigrants or toward particular groups, some immigrants may downplay or reject their own ethnic identity; others may assert their pride in their cultural group and emphasize solidarity as a way of dealing with negative attitudes" (p. 494). It may be tentatively suggested that the young Nuba men of Joseph's group were more likely to embrace the Discourse of resistance, than the Karko group or the women from both groups, who were more likely to de-emphasize their ethnic identity. The use of skin bleach is an example of this. The use of bleach, henna and wearing the *towb* for women are aspects of Sudanization, modeling behaviour after the lifestyle of the "Center" (Doornbos 1988).

It may not seem intuitive that Joseph's group, those who seem to be in a better position for taking advantage of the dominant Sudanese culture, are more likely to reject it ideologically. However, such processes are common in the literature on migrant minorities where there is a paradoxical weakening of ethnicity-related cultural practices (language or religion), there is a strengthening of ethnic identity (Nagel 1994), and reinforcement of the "other". In some sense, these people are reifying the ethnic category assigned to them by the Arab Government, by adopting the resistance Discourse, deepening the divide between them and other Sudanese. In contrast, the Karko group doesn't emphasize their regional Nubaness so much as their Karko-ness, and seek to better their situation by studying, working in Khartoum for a time but mostly would like to return to the Nuba Mountains with their skills in the future. They do not discursively differentiate themselves from "Arabs" in the same way. That Joseph's group stresses dissimilation while the Karko stress assimilation, illustrates the constructed nature of ethnic identity, that it is derived from the relationship between them and attitudes

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of the dominant society. However, the two-way integration/resistance distinction does not capture the whole story since one does not necessarily oppose the other in practice. Integration does not mean wholesale abandonment of one's own culture, and resistance does not mean complete separation from the dominant society. The two groups can roughly be distinguished by integration and resistance (separation is a more neutral term) with the additional distinction of practice vs. ideology. In practice, Joseph's group is an example of integration; they manage to maintain ethnic identification but also can comfortably merge with broader society. However, in ideology they are more closely linked to separation, united by their politics and their social identification as Nuba across their individual tribes reinforces their difference from the mainstream. In contrast, Wakeel's group is more separated in practice, since they have not developed as many relations in the dominant culture, but at the same time don't espouse anti-Arab sentiment, seem to want to make the best of both worlds by integrating, thereby softening the Nuba-Arab divide. Geschiere & Gugler (1998) discuss how "the village" (i.e. *balad* 'homeland' in Sudan), continues to be an important source of support for urban migrants in Africa, in varying ways. For some, it is the dependence on rural relations, "the language of kinship and solidarity" that connect individual members of the village community such as in the case of the Karko. The rural connection is also about group identification, as a source of "belonging" to a collective, moral, emotional and political affair, which better characterizes Joseph's group.

As has been shown, there is variability from person to person as well as broader divisions which cut across a number of factors, especially that of having grown up in the Mountains or elsewhere. More research would be necessary to make any claims about the complex dynamics of acculturation here, and this small amount of data raises more questions than can be answered. Factors requiring further investigation include: differences due to gender, education, time living in Khartoum, family history in relation to the war, and language ability among others. Additionally, it cannot be assumed that integrating or separating are necessarily exclusive permanent identity categories, nor that practice contradicts ideology, but that identity is an ever-evolving dialectic between individuals and shared cultural constructs.

Flexible identities: *Krongawi – Nubaawi – Sudaani*

Nuba university students who have migrated to Khartoum are a marginalized group faced with the practical reality of participating in the mainstream life of Sudan. On the one hand they have a new urban consciousness, where when sitting a lecture hall with hundreds of other students, "tribe" is less meaningful. On the other hand, as they make contact with the dominant culture, they are inevi-

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tably reminded of their difference. But in the city, people have more choices about how to form alliances, which need not be kin or tribe-based; they inevitably find new ways of connecting with others, negotiating their position relative to the majority. Discourses of tribal identity may be one of a number of options for belonging, and may be drawn on in different contexts with different people by the same person. As the case of Joseph's group of friends and the Karko both show, these groups both proudly defined themselves to me as Nuba, in the sense of a non-Arab ethnic category. To a White American researcher interested in Nuba languages and cultures, who had organized meetings based on this commonality, this identification was only appropriate.

As discussed earlier, being Nuba, is to be a member of an emerging ethnic group, since there is an unclear historical basis for such a unity, other than shared region. People are redefining themselves as part of a larger entity. Miller & Abu-Manga (1992) noted the tendency for the Nuba to use this label for themselves in the Takamul Gharb settlement in Khartoum North, where they comprised 20% of a mixed population of migrants, although internally they were a mix of over ten distinct tribes. They might also use the label Nuba followed by specific tribe, e.g. Nuba-Miri, Nuba-Ghulfan etc. This suggests that ethnic identity should be understood as a fluid, dynamic category defined and negotiated in social interaction within groups and in relation to other groups (Nagel 1994). Nuba-ness is a label but also a Discourse which can be employed varyingly, and in support of Sharkey's (2008) claim, is emphasized and even exaggerated in the face of forced ARABIZATION. In addition, urban migration juxtaposes these groups, intensifying interethnic tensions and reinforcing ethnic movements on both sides. Nuba defines what people are not, as much as defining what they are. Ethnic identity is about boundaries and membership, "what you think your ethnicity is, versus what they think your ethnicity is" (Nagel 1994).

Much has been written about the relationship between collective identities and boundaries in terms of similar symbolic contrasts such as "in-group/out-group", 'our space'/'their space', marginal/central, First World/Third World etc. (Dixon & Durrheim 2000). Following are several examples of how identities are shaped by in-groups based on tribe on the one hand and region on the other. In this first case, Wakeel's use of his friend's Karko family names in his text messages marks an intimate apolitical in-group relation with members of the same tribe. See his use of kejal in (4.1) above and his immediate incorporation of Imen's Karko name, Joli, here:

(4.4) Kindaجولى اخبارك
Joli akhbaarak kinda
'Joli, what is your news (untranslated)?'

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Joseph, in contrast, identified himself with a larger marginalized regional category as Nuba to me, knowing that I was interested in his Nuba-ness rather than his upbringing in Dongola in the North. The way he and his friends address one another in text-messaging supports this. See the first example (4) in the beginning of the chapter as well as the following:

(4.5) فا قداك قلوب اتعودت تسمع كلامك وضحكتك تتقسم الاخبار عليك اذيك انت وصحتك ... Kafi

fagdaak guluub it'awadat tisma' kalaamak wa DaHkatik titgasam al-akhbar 'alik izayyik inta u SaHatak …Kafi

'The heart misses you, it's accustomed to hear you and your laugh to share your news. How are you and your health…Kafi'

In (4.5), an Arabic poem is framed with the name *Kafi.* Kafi is a fairly ubiquitous name in the Nuba Mountains. More specifically it is known as a name from the area of Kadugli, near where Joseph and Kafi claim origins and where the SPLA/M has taken control from the Sudanese Government. Significantly, it is written in the Latin alphabet. As described above, the use of English language and scripts in that region has accompanied missionary activities in literacy and Bible translation. Because of Christianity's association with South Sudan, with East Africa and English historically, English has been adopted by the SPLA/M as an oppositional language to Arabic. Its' marked use connotes a specific anti-Arab ideology, which corresponds with that present in the Krongo area. Thus towards other Nuba as well as students from marginalized Peripheries in Sudan, he is Nuba, aligning himself with those who find commonality in the superordinate label "Nuba", a new ethnic category. As the example of the SPLA commander, Yusuf Kuwa Mekki, shows, a sense of belonging to a region called "Nuba" came with a political cause, that of being united in opposition to "Arabs".

I also heard Nuba people say they are from South Kordofan, the larger province where the Nuba Mountains are, keeping their exact origin ambiguous. Ensaf, one of the Karko students, said that many people, girls especially, of Nuba origin don't admit they're Nuba, but rather say they are from *bideriyya* tribe in South Kordofan, a group claiming Arab genealogy from a nearby region. She says that this is changing. As people come to University, they become more proud of their origins and discuss them more openly. Naturally, when meeting anyone from Northern Sudan outside of Sudan, a Sudanese person would state his national identity as Sudanese, without further specification unless he were from Southern Sudan, in which case, separatist sentiment might lead him to claim Southern Sudanese nationality. The label "African" is often employed by Africans outside of Africa to declare their solidarity with Africans, such as in the Rastafarian belief system, regardless of which continent they come from. In Sudan, Africanism is a movement, often identified with by Nuba people, Dar-

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furians and Southerners, and is an assertion of their Black ethnicity in contrast with Arabism.

> "The creation of 'Africanism' is more recent than the ascent of Arab supremacism. It owes much to the SPLA, whose leader, John Garang, began to speak of an 'African majority' in Sudan to counter the Islamist government's claim that Sudan should be an Islamic state because it had a majority Muslim population. Garang reached out to the Nuba and peoples of southern Blue Nile, for whom 'African' was an identity with which they could readily identify." (de Waal 2004)

All these labels show the relational flexibility of identity vis-à-vis others. These various labels and Intesar's use of the word *nuubaawi* are examples of "positioning", and reveal the ways linguistic tools are employed by people to index their position with respect to macro-social categories such as ethnicity. The way minorities and marginal groups "manage and replay" a "repertoire of identities" to "build images of themselves and their own interpretation and appropriation of mainstream labeling categories" (de Fina 2006) shows us how individual actions are connected to shared cultural constructs and used situationally.

The accounts I presented in this chapter are inconclusive, but nevertheless suggest that any coherent "Nuba identity" must be a new concept, one born out of an oppressive policy, an "invented tradition", capitalized on by Western media, largely defined by what the Nuba are *not*, namely, an inclusive part of the Arab-Sudanese population, rather than by what they share. As Manger (2001) has argued, the rhetoric surrounding the Nuba further deepens the gap between Arabs and Africans in the Sudan, and hides the empirical facts. Scholars argue that scholarship should emphasize historical continuity, that dichotomizing discourses exaggerate and simplify the situation. Manger does not glorify pre-colonial Sudan, argues against the notion that "traditional societies (…) in the old days were happy and free", and emphasizes the adoption of an Islamic identity as a long-standing process for the Nuba to exercise their *agency*. This is evidenced through the adoption of Arabic along with marriage custom, and patterns of dress. Similarly, Sharkey states that in spite of a recent surge in Africanism, that Arabization continues to spread among marginalized Sudanese groups separating ideological notions from actual processes. No one would disagree that Arabization is happening at a practical level. Given their illegitimate status, indigenous languages are highly stigmatized, perceived as being useless and even grammarless by its speakers, an attitude which in part precedes its speakers' decision to shift to Arabic.

As Manger (2001: 51) reminds us, "(…) we can show how local Nuba groups (…) have exercised agency in relation to the "structures" that dominate them, but that this does not imply that the Nuba are champions of justice, out to safeguard "moral economies". Manger's understanding of *agency* is compatible with that of van Dijk *et al.* (2007) referred to in the Introduction. People are considered

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agents, who construct their identities according to "the realities of the day" (Manger 2001: 58) emphasizing both the flexibility and the interactive nature of identity and the possibility of different levels of collectivity, for different ends. Ethnic identity is a flexible concept, referring to tribe, such as *ja'ali* which means Arab, or region, since both "Nuba" and "Southern" are used synonymously for Black color, and African ethnicity. It can also refer to culture, language and religion in the case of an Arab identity, or the newer use of the term "Sudanese", itself complexly associated with Arab and African ethnicities and cultural traits.

As we saw with Joseph's group and Wakeel's group, both integration and resistance are occurring simultaneously as individual people manipulate their social roles and strategize their own futures. Although Joseph's group is united politically, as I have argued, their connection seems based in an emotional need to belong in the city. Their new Nuba identity is a creation, in part by their real social relations, many of whom are from the same region. Africanism is also a factor since, such as in the case of Joseph, a certain brotherhood exists between them and friends from the South and Darfur. Wakeel's group is more embedded in Karko village connections on a practical level, but does not subscribe to the Nuba Discourse in the same way, although their fictionalized use of Karko in text-messaging shows how tribal identification can be constructed. Individuals draw on the various identity constructs in everyday interactions according to need. As my relation with them was defined by their Nuba origins, to me, they were Nuba people, but certainly in the bus or in the classroom, they are as Sudanese as anyone else.

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5

Text message poetry (*shi'ar iliktrooni*): The broader effects of personal practices

(5) لو البعد حرمنى من لقياك ما بقدر يحرمنى من ذاكراك غالية عندي واوعدك ثانية ما بنساك !!!
low al-bu'ud Haramni min loghiiaak ma bigdar yaHaramni min dhikraak ghaalia 'indi wa aw'adik thaania ma bansaak!!!

'If distance stops me from meeting you it can't stop me from your precious memory to me and I promise I won't forget you one second!!!'

Alessandro's story

This message was sent to me by Alessandro, one of my informants and friends, as a way of saying goodbye, just a few days before I left Sudan. Alessandro Hassan Kumsour is a 23 year-old student at the University of Khartoum. Both of his parents come from Temein, a village near the town of Dilling in the Nuba Mountains, but met and married in Khartoum in the mid 1980s. Like his parents, most all of Alessandro's "tribe", Temein, have migrated to Khartoum or El Obeid. He now has one relative in Temein with all remaining relatives in Khartoum. While a Muslim, he carries the name of his father's Italian co-worker and best friend during his father's years in Saudi Arabia as a migrant labourer. Hassan is the Muslim name of his father while Kumsour is a Temein name. Alessandro's name itself is a documentation of changes that took place, where his grandfather carried a name from the tribe, his father was given a Muslim name who then became a labour migrant, later coming into contact with an Italian company.

Alessandro was born and raised in Omdurman, the largest town of Greater Khartoum across the White Nile. He lives with his uncle and cousins, in a house with a carefully maintained, tiled courtyard, and the family has a truck, which

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Alessandro can borrow. His extended family lives in separate houses on the same street or neighbourhood, but his house is the only one with a car. I knew that this detail was important to Alessandro because when he invited me to visit his family, he mentioned that he would be able to take me home in a car, an important marker for middle-class families. He also insisted on paying for my taxi to his house, which from Khartoum to Omdurman is about US $7, not a trivial amount.

I had gone to the house of his cousin, where a meeting was arranged for me with his uncles, father and grandfather. A special meal was prepared and Alessandro by his older sister. I knew it was special because they served a large piece of lambs' meat, which is left over from the *'aid al-adha* holiday. A family's ability to slaughter a lamb for *'aid* is another important marker of social class, and their presenting meat to me was illustrative that they could afford to slaughter a lamb as well as have enough left over afterwards for guests. When I had first met Alessandro, he said that he spoke Temein, and wrote me a few text messages in it. When I visited him in his home, and met with his family, it became apparent that he had only passive knowledge of Temein but could not speak it, nor could his cousins of the same generation. And, while his father, uncles and grandfather could speak it, not one of them was using it in spontaneous group conversation. The entire meeting, most of which involved them discussing the status of their mother language, Temein, took place in Arabic.

Alessandro started learning English and French two years ago at the University of Khartoum. He sees English as the most important language both in Sudan and in the world. Although he's not ready for marriage, he told me that he would like to marry a *khawajiyya* 'foreigner girl', because he likes the 'simplicity of European life', and doesn't like the social responsibilities in Sudan. If that doesn't work out he has no restrictions on which tribe his wife might come from; she could be Temein or any tribe. He says he has friends from many tribes. One way that Alessandro keeps in touch with his diverse group of friends is by sending them poetic text messages. In fact, out of thirty-five messages that I collected from him, over twenty could be classified as either poetry, or prose or some kind of forwarded message. He says that he writes poems as well as re-using ones that he has received, in which case he will change certain details to suit the person being addressed and sometimes even translate them into English or French. When asked about how he comes up with the idea for a poem he said that he remembers ideas or words from poems that he read in *madrasa*[1]

[1] *madrasa*, commonly used in West African literature to refer to Islamic schooling, in Arabic means 'secondary school' and is not the same in Sudan as the *khaalwa* 'Qur'anic school'.

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'secondary school' but that when he has a person in mind he writes from his own thoughts.

Although Alessandro's message to me above (5), might strike an American or European reader as emotional, romance was not the intent of the author. Rather, this poem was meant as a personalized token of friendship, with more symbolic value than originality in its content. Although it was destined for me, its thematic and linguistic style is highly formulaic, and, from what I will argue in a subsequent discussion, deeply embedded in a long-standing culture of exchange, which is now re-worked into an electronic format, allowing for the mass production and consumption of these poems. It is one of about three-hundred examples of poems, *shi'ar,* that I found in the data, a little less than half of all the messages I recorded, making this type of message extremely important among middle and lower-middle class university students. As I described in Chapter 3, 'keeping in touch' is an important part of Sudanese social relations. One aspect of this culture of communication is the sending and receiving of poetic messages. These messages are distinguishable from other interactions because they don't have a practical function such as information exchange or direction giving. Their use is not limited to special occasions, but is most often described to me as a way to show a person that you are thinking about them or miss them. It seems to be one of the most significant ways that young people stay in touch with peers, make new friends, court the opposite sex, or send holiday greetings.

As I will argue in this chapter, while writing poetic letters is a pre-existing practice in Sudanese society, people's engagement with this practice was limited in the past due to the slow delivery and the dyadic nature of the exchange. SMS poetry is a textual practice which is accessible to more people, since the mobile phone permits immediate retrieval and saving, a format for editing and resending messages, and the capability of sending the same message to any number of contacts within minutes. Importantly the way people draw from other textual sources, Arabic poetry, or popular songs, and rework messages, allows for widespread entrance to the culture of poetry exchange, and connects people by way of their participation. Text messages are therefore a site for the popular recreation of existing cultural themes and ideologies. Their widespread use and their being continually reworked, and circulated in discursive texting, I argue is evidence of a "community" based on participation: writing, forwarding and receiving and shared imagination of belonging. It claims part of the "public sphere" in that many of the messages designed for private recipients move around anonymously, thereby blurring the public/private distinction. It permits people to recreate an existing Arab-Islamic tradition through their use of literary style and linguistic choices, in spite of writing in a poetic genre that came out of a movement of *indigenous* Sudanese poetry. This data poses questions about the concept of

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"community" nature of the "public sphere" (Habermas 1962). It suggests that while a community may indeed exist in imagination and discursive participation, there remains a continuity with ongoing power struggles between groups with lower status such as the Nuba and the Arab-dominated elite.

Drawing on Alessandro's story as a case which will illustrate the dynamics of this cultural pattern, I first describe the general behaviour of poetry exchange and the themes that are specific to this genre, i.e. how this pattern exists today. I then describe how early practices of letter exchange were an important thematic inspiration for popular poetry and song lyrics in the last century. In turn, popular poetry fed into the material that became the content of letters, showing how these practices were interrelated. Then I argue how the reworking and resending of these messages at a mass media level connects them in a "community of practice". In so doing it gives shape to a popular consciousness, albeit complex, based on the intertwined elements of Sudanese and Arab culture, but more importantly based on people's *understandings* of Sudanese culture, the ethnic, religious, linguistic, poetic and other elements that are meant to comprise it. Because Alessandro is such an active participant in poetry exchanges, his inbox is worth a careful analysis. In fact, Alessandro's texting behaviour seems to typify this genre of interaction in several ways, namely his cooperative turn-taking, the reworking of thematic ideas in the messages, and his use of language. Alessandro is the son of migrants from the Nuba Mountains, and as such, his tribe does not share the Arab-Islamic tradition of poetry writing and appreciation. Nonetheless, he is a prolific sender of poetry and his story is an example, which, building on the patterns of integration discussed in the last chapter, is indicative of patterns of Sudanization. In addition, through the writing of an elevated register, Alessandro's texting exhibits a dominant Arab-Islamic orientation prevalent among young people in general, regardless of their ethno-linguistic background.

The sending and receiving of poetic messages

Exchanges and expectations

A number of messages are exchanged between Alessandro and a close friend of his, a young woman named Karima. Karima is a student of engineering at Sudan University and like Alessandro is the child of migrants from the Nuba Mountains, although she is from a neighbouring tribe, Nyimang. The following is an example of one of their exchanges. Alessandro wrote:

(5.1) باختصار الحب الغيرك حرام والبسمة الغيرك اجرام وانا لغيرك انتغام
bi ikhitiSaar al-Hub l-gheerak Haraam wa al-basma l-gheerak injiraam wa ana l-gheerak intighaam
'In brief, love without you is prohibited, a smile for other than you, criminal, and me for someone other than you, revenge'

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And Karima replied:

(5.2) كل دموعى تزل با سمك كل زهرة تفوح بعطرك كل دقه بقلبى تقول بحبك
kul dumuu'i tinzil bi ismak kulu zahara tafuuH bi 'atrak kulu dagga bi gelbi taguul baHibbak[2]
'All my tears run down with your name, all flowers bloom with your scent, all my heart beats say I love you'

According to Alessandro, he and Karima are not in a love relation. He says that he is getting weary of the quantity of messages she sends him though, and even though he's not interested in her that way, he replies to each poem with another poem, sometimes one he writes himself. He sees this reciprocal behaviour as an obligation. I found the message (5.1) twice sent to Karima, on separate days, with a slight change to the words. Probably this repetition was unintentional, because I found other of his poems sent to several different recipients, and he may have lost track of which poems were sent to whom.

In another exchange, Alessandro received a poem from an unknown number. He said that it is not uncommon for both girls and boys to call or send messages to unknown numbers in order to start a relationship. He responded to the original message with the following:

(5.3) النحت على جبل صلب اسهل بألف من البحث عن مفرده انيقه تحمل اليكى تحياتى
al naHat 'ala jebel Salb ashal bi alif min al baHath 'an mufrada aniiqa taHmil ileeki taHiyaati
'Carving into a solid mountain is a thousand times easier than finding attractive words to greet you'

Later the mysterious texter replied:

(5.4) سلام ومشتاق وفاكرك اكثر من روحى يانسمه جات عبر الاثير سلام ياحبيب واظهر ما تغيب عشان تعيد لينا البسمه ...
salaam wa mushtaag wa faakrik akthar min ruuHi ya nasma jaat 'abr al-athiir salaam ya habeeb wa azHar ma taghiib 'ashaan ta'iid leena al-basma
'How are you, I miss you and I appreciate you more than myself, you're a breeze coming through the waves, how are you, my love, show yourself, don't be absent so you bring us a smile'

Alessandro has had his phone number for six years. While most young people only have had a phone for two or three years, Alessandro was given a phone early on when he worked at a hotel and therefore is an owner of one of the older telephone numbers in Sudan, recognizable by their first two numbers 22 or 23 after the standard Mobitel prefix 091. Phone numbers starting with these digits

[2] Underlining in the transliteration means that the language is *fuSHa*. Unmarked means Sudanese Colloquial language is used.

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are highly prized because they were the first numbers to come out with mobile telephones, by the first company Mobitel, now Zain, and cost around $100 at the time, which may be the reason that the mysterious texter contacted him, someone trying numbers with these prefixes. According to Alessandro, most people with these numbers are businessmen, or from the upper class; "only they could afford it".

As Alessandro's behaviour suggests, poems are sent between friends, lovers and relatives of the same age, between young women, between young men and between men and women, sometimes for romantic reasons but equally for reasons of simple friendship. The following poem was sent to Hashim, one of my informants and according to him, was personally written by a male childhood friend from his hometown in Sennar province. Hashim responded to that poem by writing one of his own (5.6), which he said was inspired by the meaning of the first

(5.5) ارسل ليك سلام لو رفع الى السماء كان قمرا منيرا ولو نزل الى الأرض لكساها سندسا وحرير وأذكرك بانى بالدنيا موجود وبان عندى مسرور .

arSil leek salaam low rufi' ila al sama' kaan ghamaran muniran wa low nazal ila al arid lakasaha sundusan wa Harir wa aTHikiruka ba'anni bi al-dunia moujuud wa ba'anni 'andi masruur

'I send you greetings if it rises into the sky it lights up the moon and if it falls down to the ground, it dresses it with silk and fiber to remind you that I exist with the world and I am pleasant'

(5.6) هنالك اناس كالجبال الشامخة صحبتهم شرف رفقتهم افتخار نسيانهم محال

hunaak unaas kel jibaal al-shaamkha SaHabithum sharaf rafagathum aftakhaar nisiyaanahum muHaal

'There are people like high mountains, their friendship is an honor, their company is pride, impossible to forget them'

This exchange is highly personal as these poems were written for the other person. In contrast, the following poem was found in four people's inboxes:

(5.7) فا قداك قلوب اتعود ت تسمع كلامك وضحكتك تتقسم الاخبار عليك اذيك انت وصحتك ... Kafi

fagdaak guluub it'awadat tisma' kalaamak wa DaHkatik titgasam al-akhbar 'alik izayyik inta wa SaHatak … Kafi

'The heart misses you, it's accustomed to hear you and your laugh to share your news. How are you and your health … Kafi'

Joseph, from whom I recorded this particular message, had requested it from his friend Kafi with the intent of saving it and using it in the future. For Joseph, like Alessandro, many messages are sent to several recipients, after the details are modified to accord for gender or for the occasion, such as a holiday.

People differ in their opinions about poetry exchange. Many, such as Hashim, find it an important part of a relationship, while some tell me that a poem is

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expected in response to one being sent, and they mostly adhere to this expectation by convention. Others make a distinction between their close friends, to whom they may carefully select or write a poem and other acquaintances to whom they send generic messages. For these there does not seem to be a correlation in the meaning of poems; they are sent as tokens. Friendships are often initiated with a poem. If the message is reciprocated, more personalized messages may follow, where a dialogue is opened about other topics. Some friendships seem to exist only through poetry exchange. For example, Alessandro had never met one of his poetry-texters, but had an ongoing poetic exchange with an unknown person. Fellah met a young man once in public transportation, exchanged numbers, and a year later was still in contact with him only via poetry messages on major holidays, but never in person. Most of their exchanges were religious. Language is also correlated as one student writes in Sudanese Colloquial Arabic to her close friends but is more likely to send a poem in Classical Arabic to someone she knows less well.

(5.8) I hope to you Happy New Year soft as silk white as milk sweet as honey and full of money

Most said that they either reuse messages that are sent to them or they might take them from books of poetry they have at home or the library, from the newspapers such as *gelb bi-shari'* 'Heart on the street', or magazines. Other sources include poetry told them by their grandparents, from TV, songs or certain message services. Alessandro subscribes to a message service called MNM which works in coordination with the service provider and sends generic messages about science or jokes. For those who write them, many have told me that they were inspired by poems they read in *madrasa* 'secondary school'. Hashim, (5.6) above, learned this style of writing while waiting in the morning queue at *madrasa*. For 20 minutes every day one student was responsible for reciting poetry, Hashim had this responsibility.

The theme of ittiSaal 'connecting'

(5.9) لو بعدنا ولو قسينا ولو يموت الوصل فينا ,انتو أغلى الناس علينا
low ba'idna wa low gisiina wa low yamuut al wusil fina intu aghla al naas 'aleena
'If we grow distant and if we become stiff and if the connection dies between us, you remain the most precious among us'

In their various formulations the poems revolve around a limited collection of themes including communication, friendship, love, appreciation, affection and happiness. This poem exemplifies the prototypical theme of SMS poetry, that of communicating or 'connecting' *ittiSaal*, (here 'connection' *al-wusil*), itself, an aspect of 'keeping in touch', which I described as an important cultural ethos in

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Chapter 3. The poems both function to connect literally and perform connection through a message which deals with the theme of 'keeping in touch'. Overwhelmingly, the poems are about a problematic of *al-bu'd* 'distance', *al-shooq* 'missing', *ghiaab* 'absence', not 'seeing you' *shaafitak* or 'meeting you' *loghiaak*.

Picture 5.1 Three students all observing that they all had the same message in (5.8) above.

(5.10) وكت يشقينى هم بعدك واحس بانى جد حزنان ومفتقدك أقيف اترقب اللحظات رساله حروف من شهدك ...حدودها من معين ودك

wakit yishqiini ham bu'dak wa aHiss bianni jedd Haznan muftagdak agif ataraqab al-laHzaat risaala huruufa min shahadik Huduuda min ma'aiin wuddak

'When I think of your distance, I worry and feel sadness missing you, I stop, expecting the moment of a message, its letters made of your honey, its limits are the source of your love'

(5.11) *اذا غاب النظر عنكم فليس القلب ينساكم تدوم لنا معزتكم وتحيا حين نلقاكم

izza ghaaba al-nazar 'andkum feleisa al-gelb ya yansaakum taduum lena ma'azatakum wa taHiiya Hina nalgakum

'If I lose sight of you the heart doesn't forget you, our appreciation for you survives with us and is alive when we meet you'

One prevalent metaphor in the language for describing the feeling of longing is the *baHar* 'sea' which also occurs in the common expression *baHar al shooq* 'missing seas' as in 'I miss you tons'. Observe the following uses of 'sea':

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(5.12) يا نادر بين البشر يالؤلؤ وسط البحر وحشتونى وينكم لا حس ولا خبر
ya naadar been al-bashar ya lu'lu' wasT al-bahar waHashtuuni weenkum la Hiss wa la khabar
'You are seldom among the people you are jewels in the sea, I miss you, where are you no sound no news'

(5.13) ان جفت بحر الشوق مراسيها برسل ليك سفينة نوح وبى دموعى امشيها
injifat baHar al-shooq marasiiha barassil leek sefiinat nuH wa bi dumuu'i amashiiha
'If the sea of missing dries up its berth, I send to you Noah's arc and sail it with my tears'

The ways of dealing with the emotion of longing is through communication and memory. Literal terms such as *ittiSaal* 'connection, *rassal* 'write', *risaala* 'letter/message' and other metaphors for writing are common, *al-huruuf* 'letter (alphabetic)', *kalimaat* 'words', *SafHaat* 'pages', *al-bariid* 'package'. *dhikra* 'memory' and *mokhayala* 'imagination' are other means for avoiding forgetfulness. *Al-murassla* 'messengers', and the metaphor *nesma* 'breeze' are the means for delivery of the messages.

(5.14) الشوق فى حقيقتو خطاب ,مدارو اللهفه,حروفو عزاب ,نارو .لما تزيد تشيلو النسمه ساعى بريد على صفحات أقل وعتاب.
al-shooq fi Haqiiqtu khiTaab madaaru al lahfa, Haruufu 'azaab, naaru. Lemma taziid tashiilu al nesma saa'a bariid 'ala SafaHaat 'aqal wa 'itaab
'Missing, in fact, is a message surrounded by anxiety. Its letters torture with fire, when it grows the breeze takes it as a messenger of the pages to lessen the complaining'

(5.15) قد تعجز الحروف فى تجسيد اشواقنا ليكم فنحتمى بالصمت فلا تلومونا (كل عام وانتم بخير).
qud ta'jiz al Huruuf fi tasjiid ashwaagna leekum fanaH temi bi al-Samt fella teluumuuna (kul 'aam wa antum bekhair)
'Sometimes the letters fail to expres our longings to you, which is why we resort to silence, so please don't blame us (that every year, you are well)'

As I have shown in this section, poetry exchange is an important type of text message among young Sudanese students, which raises questions about the cultural origins of this practice. Is this practice a new one, emerging from mobile phones? Or is this an adaptation of an earlier communicative pattern? In the next section, I will explore the earlier patterns of letter-writing and the role of popular poetry in society before returning to mobile phones, Alessandro and the current study.

Poetry in the Sudanese context

Earlier means of poetry exchange

The exchange of personal letters has existed in Sudan since the 19th century (Spaulding 1993), although literacy was extremely low, even up through British colonial times, perhaps less than 1% of the population, (Sharkey 1999). The

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establishment of the post office, *al-busta,* was an important point of mediation and means of transmission in colonial Sudan. Its infrastructure connected colonial officials at various outposts through official correspondence, and was used for distribution of the first private newspaper *Al-Sudan,* which, in turn, served as a medium for letters from readers as well as publishing poems (*Ibid.*). The importance of the post office has diminished today, but its legacy is still apparent. In Omdurman, for example, the largest of the three towns that constitute Khartoum, the capital, and what many would say is the cultural heart of Sudan and the birthplace of the nationalist movement, the post office is a central point of reference, situated at the edge of the largest *souk* 'market' in Sudan, as well as an important bus station. Bus stations, in turn, were important places for transmitting personal letters across short or large distances, by way of a messenger, *murassla.* The *murassla* was an intermediary who happened to be going to the same place that the letter was destined, whether it was across town or in Port Sudan on the Red Sea.

From my data, I learned that exchanging personal letters was a common practice as far back as the 1960s, one which clearly forms the cultural basis for the current practice of SMS exchange, even up until very recently. My younger informants were able to report the same type of letter exchanges among school students just before the mobile phone became widespread in Sudan less than five years ago. Although more data collection would be necessary to have a better picture of the past, from a limited number of discussions with people in their 50's, I learned that letters were indeed exchanged between relatives and friends, and especially lovers. Importantly, these earlier interactions were mostly dyadic, between two people, and slow, a letter coming every couple months. In the past, rules governing male-female relations apparently were even stricter than today, such that communications were difficult, but not uncommon. Nonetheless, before the mobile phone, these exchanges were less frequent and not everyone engaged in them.

But this poetic writing then, like now, was not limited to personal letters. One informant has a memory from 1988, in his small town schoolhouse, where poetic messages were anonymously scribbled on bits of paper and stuffed into the school desk, for whomever was to sit there afterwards. This kind of semi-personal writing is similar in practice to SMS exchange, although differing in scope. Young people are now likely to send off several poems daily, while schoolhouse notes probably reached about as many people over a week, although its recipients weren't specified.

In earlier interpersonal correspondence, people were more likely to write in prose; the letters were longer although the themes and the strategies were the same or similar. People wrote of their emotions, of missing a person, of keeping

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in touch. They also copied popular poetry and song lyrics into their letters, which brings us to the question of the origin of this artistic style, at the confrontation of interpersonal and mass media through popular culture. How does one medium feed into the other, and what cultural inspirations do people draw on in composing a message?

According to Dr. Sadiq Mustafa al Rayah at the University of Khartoum's Arabic Literature Department, the SMS poems can be roughly divided into the following categories: Islamic, Arabic literature and poetry, Sudanese folklore or songs, globalized culture such as popular music or films. These categories, however, are superficial and quickly break down since much of Classical Arabic literature is inspired by Islam, and much of Sudanese folklore and poetry is inspired by Arabic literature and poetry as well as Islam, and most of the globalized music that becomes popular in Sudan comes from Egypt or Lebanon, which in turn is inspired from Arabic themes and styles and Islam. Therefore tracing the 'social life' of an SMS poem from its original inspiration, be it an old Qur'anic text, a Sufi chant, a Nubian folktale or an Egyptian pop song, would be difficult as references are not attached, and authority is not claimed. However, the question of real origin is not so much an issue here as is how people perceive it and how this guides their behaviour. For the Northern Sudanese, definitions of what constitute a Sudanese identity are complex and conflicting, and the process of emphasizing cultural sources at the expense of others, comes out in the *Haqiiiba* poetic movement of the last century, which is likely the main source for the majority of SMS poems. In the next section, I will investigate the history of this genre of popular poetry and song in Sudan from the turn of the last century to the 1960's and post-independence.

Popular poetry and song in the Sudan

Understanding what is meant by Northern Sudanese[3] poetry and song cannot be achieved without an inquiry into what it means to be Sudanese, as this is the question that the majority of the poets and musicians struggled with in parallel with the political events of the last century (Abusabib 2004). While the issue of what constitutes a Sudanese identity is the subject of ongoing debates, it is accepted in most academic scholarship (*Ibid.*) that both African and Arab elements contributed to Sudanese poetry and music[4] albeit in complex ways. At the turn of

[3] My use of the term Northern Sudanese refers to the ruling elite from urban "Center" (Greater Khartoum) in Northern Sudan and their cultural dominance in defining Sudanese identity (see Chapter 2).

[4] Poetry and musical styles are sometimes considered one and the same, rather than divided into the Western categories of poetry being limited to a literary rhythmic spoken or written style and song being defined as a musical genre. In the Sudanese tradition in the early part of the 20th century, two styles emerged which are referred to as poetic as well as musical oral styles, *dobeet* and *Haqiiba*.

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the 20th century and before the nationalist movement, Sudanese literature existed in two veins: 1) what is termed "folklore" including proverbs, myths, lyrics and colloquial poetry and 2) poetry modeled on the classical Arabic tradition. The former also had its roots in the Arabic poetic tradition but one that became localized over the centuries as Classical Arabic evolved into Colloquial Sudanese and merged with pre-Arab-Islamic styles and local African languages. Most of this tradition is oral since literacy in Arabic was limited to the Sufi teachers. They merged Islamic teachings with local song and poetry rhythms and used colloquial language. The latter refers to the poetry of the educated elite, the *'ulama*, a class distinct from the Sufis, who, having benefited from training in Classical Arabic in Egypt or Saudi Arabia, returned to Sudan as teachers or judges of *shari'a*. They modeled their poetry on the Classical tradition from Mecca, and mostly wrote praise poems *madiiH/madayyiH* for the prophet or later, the Mahdi. Their ideology was *al 'uruba* 'Arabism', based in Arabic genealogy and culture, and Islamic faith (*Ibid.*). Their religious conservatism continues to exist today, and their support of the current Islamic military regime attests to their ongoing importance as an ideological force.

Among Sudanese folkloric styles, is the poetic genre, *dobeet*, which is a primarily male song poem created in a pastoral setting or village by camel-herding Bedouins.[5] Their themes concerned courtship *al-ghazal*, descriptions of nature *waSf*, taunting *Hija'* and self-praise *fakh,* praise *madiH* and obituaries *rithaa'*. These genres, while sung in Colloquial Sudanese, are clearly descended from Classical Arabic poetry to which local styles are added: rally-to-war poetry, cultivation songs, and songs about traditional houses *shenda* and *khema* and homeland. Some text messages, which probably descended from the folkloric tradition, appear in the data that I collected. The following text message has a singing rhyme scheme which is like that of *dobeet*, and it is in SCA:

(5.16) لما ترسل لى رساله كنت بسعد يوم وصولا كنت بترقب مجيها والامانى الكان تقولا انو تسكن السعادة وتبقى
lemma tarsil leey risaala kunta basaa'd yoom wosuula kunta batraghab majiiha wa al amaani al-kaan taguula inno teskun al-sa'aada wa tabga
'Whenever you send me a message I am pleased with its arrival I expect that it comes and hope that what you say lives happily and survives'

I collected a number of messages which concern *'assal* 'honey'. These are not written in Sudanese Colloquial Arabic, but in an elevated register[6] which I discuss later. However, the theme is likely inspired by Sudanese folklore.

5 Interview Sadiq, January 2009.

6 In a later section I discuss Elevated Khartoum Arabic (EKA). For now, I indicate this type of message in bold.

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5.17) *نحله خالفه رجل على رجل عارف لبه عشان محتارة تخلق عسل زيك
naHla khaalfa rijl ‘ala rijl ‘aarif leeh ‘ashaan muHtaara takhlaq ‘assal zeyyik
‘A bee crosses one leg over the other, why? Because it’s confused about how to make honey like you’

The following SMS is a proverb with the very old Sudanese words *jarbu’* and *habaaltik*:

(5.18) أقدر على سنه جوع ..اقدر الاحق جربوع .. بس ما اقدر ابعد عن هبالتك اسبوع !!
agdar ‘ala sana ju‘..agdar al-aHiq jarbuu‘ bas ma agdar aba‘id ‘an habaaltik usbuu‘
‘I can stay hungry for one year and I can chase and catch a rat but I can’t keep myself away from a fool for one week’

In the 1920s a new genre of poem appeared, *Haqiiba*, which is probably the source for the majority of text message poems that I find, as well as the source of inspiration for the urban modern Sudanese music genre, which really took root in the 1940s and dominates today. Although difficult to classify, because it, too, has roots in both Arabic and Colloquial Sudanese poetry it is known to be passionate, dealing with emotions, with Sudan, with the Qur’an, nature and especially love. It also developed in rural settings and borrowed structural aspects from Sufi chants and Nubian rhythms and was sung in both Sudanese and in Classical Arabic.

One way that *Haqiiba* is distinguished from Classical Arabic Poetry is the way time is dealt with. In *Haqiiba* the literal terms *SebaH* ‘morning’, *misa’* ‘evening’ are used while Classical style is metaphorical, the sun and the moon, for example. In the SMS data, I find both, although a substantial number of poems use the terms morning and evening. *Haqiiba* poet ‘Abeed Abdel Rahman wrote a poem of extolment in SCA: “You’re most beautiful, pure as water in a glittery glass pleasing your morning and make your evening happiness”. Observe the following SMS poems, most likely inspired by a *Haqiiba* source:

(5.19) يسعد مساك والفرحة تقدل في سماك والدنيا تديك كل مناك والبسمة ما تغادر شفاك مشتاقين
yasa‘id masaak wa al-farHa tagdil fi semaak wa al-dunia taddiik kul munaak wa al-basma ma taghaadir shafaak mushtaagiin
‘That he makes your evening pleasant and happiness saunter in your sky, and that the world gives you all your wishes and that the smile doesn’t leave your lips. I miss you’

(5.20) السلام عليكم صباح الخير يا أروع صباح الواحد يصبح بيه على نفسه يا أفهم وأرق وأحلى وألطف (زولة)
al-salaam ‘aleekum SebaH al-khair ya arwa‘ SebaH al-waaHid yuSabi‘ bihu ‘ala nafsa ya afham wa araqa wa aHla wa alTaf (zoola)
‘Peace be upon you, good morning, you are as nice as a morning that greets me, you are a most knowing, soft-hearted, beautiful and nice person’

Another feature of *Haqiiba* is the theme that I described in detail above, the theme of *al-shooq* ‘missing’, which also is important in Classical poetry. Early *Haqiiba* poet Khalil Farah was inspired by Arabic poetry but wrote in SCA: “my

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missing you is uncountable". Abu Salah Sa'id uses the metaphor 'missing seas' *baHar al shooq* in the following *Haqiiba* source: *jismi naaHil baHar al shooq* 'my body is frail from seas of missing (…)'. Popular singers of the Haqiiba-based music sang of the theme of 'keeping in touch' which clearly comes out in the SMS poetry, although through methods that were used in the past rather than the mobile phone; they sang of the letter *kitaab* 'lit. writing' and even of the post office box. Mohammed Wardi sang, *kitaabaati al-bowadiiha taguul la bitimshi la hajja wadeet leehu zool mursaal maasha u ma jaa,* 'My letter which I sent said to me it wouldn't go at all, I brought him a messenger who went and didn't return'. Ajaabri sang, *ma fi hatta risaala waHda biha ataman shwaaya wa al-wu'd beenatna inno kul yoom tarsil leeha,* 'Not even one message to reassure me a little and the promise between us is to send everyday'. Hashim Siddiq's lyrics suggest that he will send the letters by the wind, rather than entrusting a messenger, *wa Hatik ma bakhut 'anwaan wa ma bektib isim insaan wa barmi jawaab fi barid wa ma baddihu lee zolan kamaan fi yid,* 'I swear to you I won't put the address and I won't write people's names and I won't throw the letter in the postbox and I won't give it anyone in his hand'.

Along with these poems of Sudanese origin, or at least Sudanese inspiration, I found a large number of poems written in *fuSHa*, coming from Arabic, religious, literary or poetic sources as well. This shows that the Sudanese connection to the Arab-Islamic world is an ongoing event, not one that had a one-time important impact in the 16th century, when Sudan was consolidated under the Islamicized Funj Kingdom. But while earlier Islam evolved under local conditions, continued reference is made and remade to the original source of the Arab-Islamic world, Mecca, through the writings and language that came from the Arabian Peninsula.

How artists and others drew from and continue to draw from these elements to cast their version of a Sudanese cultural identity can be better discussed as ideological constructs with the idioms of Islamism, Arabism and Sudanism. In the next section I will take a historical approach by reviewing how popular poetry, media and language interacted during the last century in Sudan. I attempt to demonstrate how one medium may feed into another, how poetry as a cultural object is borrowed or absorbed from other media sources, made local, and recast as one of several competing conceptions of "tradition" as it concerned nationalism, and conflicting interpretations of what it means to be Sudanese.

Nationalism, poetry and the media

As is true with other arts, the role of the media cannot be understated in influencing popular poetry and song. In fact, many of the early newspaper writers came from the educated elite, were graduates of Gordon College, the British colonial training school (now University of Khartoum), and were also authors

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and poets, using this medium as a forum for their artistic as well as political ideas. Until the late colonial era, readership was limited to this elite group due to low literacy rates; but in the early independence period, around 20% of men and 4% of women were literate, making written media more accessible to popular audiences (Sharkey 1999). By promoting certain genres and styles over others, allowing for the publication or the broadcasting of certain works, controlling for content as well as language, the newspaper and radio media had a lot to do with the emergence of a Northern Sudanese urban artistic style.

The first commercial newspaper, *Al-Sudan*, which emerged at the beginning of the British colonial era in 1903, published occasional poems, often from Egypt. Within a decade, another Arabic language paper *Ra'id al-Sudan* 'Sudanese Leader' was sponsoring regular poetry contests along with local news, essays and literary and cultural writings. The early contributors were inspired by Egyptian poetry, and an Arab-Islamic resurgence, and their writings reflected their disdain for, "pagan, superstitious, or otherwise 'un-Islamic' customs (that) were thwarting hopes for new Arab glory in Sudan" (Sharkey 1999: 534). Although it took another twenty years, this Arab-Islamic oriented thinking inspired the nationalist movement, which helped the Northern Sudanese elite find unity within. By using Classical Arabic form to symbolize Islamic virtues, these early writers, like the British, opposed themselves to Sudanese traditions, which they saw as obstacles to modernization, albeit through the idioms of Arabism and Islamism. One of these poets, 'Ali 'Abd al-Rahman, writing about Arabic literature, news and language wrote, "I found that Sudanese traditions, characteristics, sayings, myths, and children's play are scattered throughout these books in the way dew is scattered on flowers" (quoted in Abusabib 2004: 66), in an attempt to show how Sudanese custom was essentially based in Arabic tradition.

In the same decade emerged the first poets, for whom nationalism meant the development of a 'truly Sudanese' literature, which would capture the personality, originality and 'genuine feeling' of the Sudanese. Al-Amin 'Ali Madani critiqued Classical Arabic poetry and poets as being artificial and old-fashioned, calling for a simpler, authentic, and modern poetic style. Hamza al-Malik Tambal published a collection of poems, *Diwan-al Tab'ia* in which everyday Sudanese life and depictions of scenery are central themes. Rather than relegating Sudanese traditions to the past, these authors, partly inspired by Western and Egyptian literature, redefined a modern national literature based on an ideology of Sudanism (Abusabib 2004), hence the term *sudaani* 'Sudanese' first came to be used for educated Northern elite, rather than *al-*'*arab* 'Arabs'. What they considered essentially Sudanese, reflecting the temperament, aesthetic and mood of the people, was used as a cultural model to develop a nation on. In the 1930's the magazines *al-Nahda* 'The Awakening' and *al-Fajr* 'The Dawn' published many

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works inspired by this (Sharkey 1999; Abusabib 2004), however, even at this early stage, definitions of Sudanism differed, some calling on notions of Arab-African hybridity, others on 'Islamic-Arabic culture supported and enriched by European thought' and modernization combined with the Sudanese sentiment, "the characters and traditions of the people (…) its deserts and jungles, its bright skies and fertile valleys" (Mahjub, cited in Abusabib 2004). Mahjub, a poet and advocate of Sudanism, encouraged his contemporaries to document Sudanese stories, and histories and to develop a *shi'ar qawmi* 'national poetry' in Arabic (Sharkey 1999) as well as local languages and Colloquial Sudanese.

While literary journals dominated in the early nationalist movements of the 20s and 30s, few but the elite could read these works, and it wasn't until post-independence that literacy took hold and modern literature could be popularly accessible. In parallel with the nationalist movement in elite circles, however, emerged the urban genre of popular *Haqiiba* song. It cannot be separated from more politicized poetry of the Sudanese nationalist movement, since many of its poets were also singers, such as Khalil Farah. The advent of the phonograph and Radio Omdurman in the 1940s made the *Haqiiba* based "Omdurman Song" music *the* genre of popular urban music. Popular music and Radio Omdurman, as with earlier *Haqiiba* songs, were sites for the contestation of Sudanese identity through competing definitions of what is meant by "Sudanese", particularly since media became nationalized, and Arab-Islamic ideologies dominated the first governments of Sudan. In fact, while the art institution was generally a milieu where African or Sudanese alternatives to Arab-Islamic art flourished, the policies of ARABIZATION and ISLAMIZATION imposed by the independent government continually hampered the free expression of the artist (Abusabib 2004).

One of the key ways that poetry and song was manipulated for Arab-Islamic nationalist aims was through the independent government's policy on language. Early poets, Khalil Farah, of Nubian origin and Mohammed Osman from the Hadendowa tribe used *fuSHa* in their poetry and later used Colloquial Sudanese as Sudanism told hold, although neither Arabic nor Sudanese languages were mother tongues for them.[7] Later, in the era of broadcast radio, popular poets and musicians Mohamed Wardi and Abu Amna Hamid, and Abdelgadir Salim, from Nubian, Western and Bagaara origins, respectively, incorporated regional indigenous musical styles and also wrote in Sudanese Colloquial language, but were rendered instruments of Arabism as Radio Omdurman censored songs written in colloquial languages and forced artists to perform in Classical Arabic. Mohammed Wardi, known for his romantic as well as national socialist songs was also known for his opposition to military rule and was repeatedly jailed and perse-

[7] Interview Sadiq, January 2009.

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cuted for his resistance (Abusabib 2004). Abdelgadir Salim, ironically sang of old Christian kingdoms of Sudan, some before the presence of Arabs, but in Classical Arabic: *ya watani sudaani, ya watani…merowe tashHat soba wa nabda 'azam nathda banaaha juduudna,* 'Oh, my Sudanese country, Merowe witness Soba and Nabda glory, progress built by our grandparents'[8].

In spite of these restrictions, the art institution, and the Omdurman Song in particular, are products of the Sudanization process, where the cultural and aesthetic style of the urban center interacted with regional poetry and music traditions, in the formation of a unique music style. Aside from sometimes being sung in Classical Arabic, it can otherwise not be classified as Arabic music, neither in rhythms and melodies nor in themes.

This poetry emerged from an ideology of Sudanism, which recognizes distinct cultural origins for Sudanese traditions. While recognizing the importance of the Arabic language and Islamic faith, it contrasts with it by emphasizing the local 'Sudanese' *suudaani* over the Arab '*uruba* as a defining aspect of national identity. However, even though it is a Sudanese style, its modern urban form, the Omdurman Song, is very much based in the elite urban culture of Omdurman,

Picture 5.2 Pyramids of the Napatan Kingdom of Kush, one of the pre-Islamic sources of inspiration for Haqiiba poets

8 Interview Sadiq, January 2009.

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and mostly being sung in Arabic, still does not accurately represent the variety of traditions and cultures in Sudan. Like the more conservative Arab-Islamist ideology, it too, cast its own version of history, since it was based on the aesthetic of the people of the urban capital.

My intent in this section was to illustrate how artists and producers of media control and manipulate themes and language, which then influence the popular aesthetic. SMS exchanges are a continuation of this process. Differently from these earlier interactions, SMS exchanges now allow for more people to reshape the original form, essentially absorbing the art form previously limited to elite producers, making it truly popular, as anyone with a mobile phone can engage in it. In the next sections, I will discuss how people's engagement with this art form, allows for these newer participants and producers to reconstruct a cultural tradition, in that they are using a modern capacity of the mobile phone to perpetuate an earlier cultural practice, that of 'keeping in touch' through poetry and song.

The 'social circulation' of SMS poetry and the 'mediation' of 'missing'

I have described, the "Sudanese" genre of popular *Haqiiba* poetry and music probably inspired many or most of the poetic text messages. These poems influenced the popular Sudanese aesthetic, and its lyrics worked their way from the newspaper or radio into personal letter exchanges in the past, as well as being influenced in turn by the importance of 'keeping in touch' as an emotional theme, as we saw in the lyrics about writing letters and absence. However, the messages are decontextualized as information about the source of any of the writings is difficult, if not impossible. According to Dr. Omer al Siddiq at the Arabic Language Institute at the University of Khartoum, very few, if any, of these poems were exact quotes, excepting, perhaps some of the song lyrics and the more religious ones. Poems migrate from various sources, from spoken or musical oral genres, to newspapers and magazines, to personal letters exchanges, involving messengers, missing, silence and communication, the theme which is then sung about in new songs, the lyrics of which are then copied into personal letters, and later SMS poems, forwarded, reworked, resent, added onto, and resent again, in an ongoing process. Returning to Alessandro's story, in the following examples and subsequent argumentation, I illustrate how the mobile phone is situated in this chain of connections, how the text message is a type of written media, a hybrid between mass and interpersonal media, and a context which allows for the popular revival and widespread use of poetry writing and sending. Based on Alessandro's and others' poems, I argue that a clear line cannot be drawn between originally written and copied or re-worked poems. This is

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because of *intertextuality* and how the borrowing and repetition of words, phrases and themes makes such a distinction difficult, but more importantly that in the process of intertextualization, messages change as they are reconfigured, which, when circulated in the community, may influence the public imagination.

The title that I have adopted for this section is an intertextual play on the title of an influential article by Spitulnik (1996): "The social circulation of media discourse and the mediation of communities", in which she illustrates how media discourse in Zambia Radio broadcasts filters into common use, circulates in popular discourse, and is recontextualized so that it creates a feeling of shared meaning, and shared community in Zambian society. She argues that media discourses are entangled in other utterances and dialogues which make them interpretable, "cross-linkages of language in use", or "intertextuality" (following Bakhtin). As speech forms are transported from one context to another, they lose certain meanings and obtain others, are "decontextualized" and "recontextualized". Because of their public accessibility, these intertextual bits create a Discourse through shared use, and shared meaning:

> "mass media can serve as reservoirs and reference points for the circulation of words, phrases, and discourse styles in popular culture. In addition, (…) mass media – on-going, high-status, public communication forms – have the potential to magnify and even create the "socially charged life" of certain linguistic forms (Bakhtin 1981: 293)." (Spitulnik 1996: 162)

She further suggests that through media discourse, and the subsequent widespread use of this language laterally in society, claims can be made about media's role in the formation of a "speech community". She describes how high "frequency of interaction", "density of communication" and "shared linguistic knowledge" are effects of mass communication in a *vertical* sense, between people and the media source, rather than a *lateral* sense as was meant by Gumperz's early definition of a "speech community", people connected by talk. These attributes are important but not sufficient criteria for the formation of a community, where a common sympathy, an "experience of belonging", or, using Anderson's notion of shared identity through imagination, are necessary attributes. Spitulnik (1996: 164) critiques Anderson saying that, "production is only half the picture":

> "We also need to factor in what is happening at the levels of reception and lateral communication (…) I suggest in the following that the repeating, recycling, and recontextualizing of media discourse is an important component in the formation of community in a kind of subterranean way, because it establishes an indirect connectivity or intertextuality across media consumers and across instances of media consumption."

Through the process of intertextualization, mass media discourse moves laterally in society as well, lending further support to the idea of a "speech community" and the importance of the media in the formation of belonging.

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While this discussion concerns mass media, many of its features are applicable to the current study. Even though the mobile phone was designed for interpersonal use, its flexible format allows for instant high frequency interaction, quick informal writing, easy editing, and resending capacities, as well as being portable, making it extremely accessible. In fact, even though Spitulnik emphasized the intertextual lateral functions of media discourse, "small media" such as the mobile phone, put these lateral interactions on center stage, a genre of communication where the frequency and density of daily texting is greater than the outside sourcing of mass media texts such as newspapers or songs.

Through the process of personalizing messages, different 'voices and texts' are incorporated but they are contextualized to the interpersonal interaction. When this happens, meaning is recentered or recontextualized to align participants or signal positionings in messages between two people. It occurs in subtle and different ways. In the next section, I give examples of how this may happen in the text-message data. I first give an example of the recurring paradigm of 'keeping in touch' as an intertextual theme, which is continually renewed. Then, drawing from the linguistic tools of footing, positioning and codeswitching that I introduced in Chapter 3, I will discuss several ways that SMS poetry is intertextually constructed in text messaging, depending on the alignment of interactants and the identities they want to project.

Intertextual texting

Here I introduce four ways that recontextualization occurs: 1) repetition of themes, 2) framing messages, 3) adding onto or reworking messages and 4) writing "original" messages.

The recursive discourse of 'keeping in touch'

We saw in the above discussion how metapragmatic discourse (speech about speaking), or in this case, keeping in touch by writing about 'keeping in touch', figures in Sudanese poetry and song, as well as letters and later text messages. I provided a lot of data on this above and will add several variations here. For example, the theme reincarnates in other languages:

(5.21) سنتارى بنتارى فنتر قارى شن شن لارى يعنى مشتاقين شديد بالايطالى ...
sentari bintari fantari gari shanshan laari ya'ni mushtaagiin shadiid bil iTaaliyya
'sentari bintari fantari gari shanshan laari means I miss you a lot in Italian'

(5.22) كوكو كرنجى لوساكا كرون يعني بالنيجيرى مشتاقين .شوق . شديد
kuku krinji lusaaka krun ya'ni binnigiri mushtaagiin shooq shadiid
'kuku krinji lusaaka krun means in Nigerian I miss you a lot'

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In the following two examples from Alessandro, the means for delivery of the message modernize from a messenger *murassla* or a breeze *nesma* (as we saw previously) to the word *phone* itself *jawaal* or *haatif* (5.23-5.24) but still finds its way into the content of the poem. Like the older means of 'keeping in touch', the text message exchange itself becomes a theme for a poem, showing how new modes of interaction are incorporated into older themes of keeping in touch through exchanging messages in order to deal with 'the missing'.

(5.23) تبقى كل الدنيا سمحه لما بس هاتفك يواصل ترحل احزانى العميقه
tabga kul al-dunia samHa lemma bas **haatfak** yuwaaSil tarHal aHzaani al-'amiiga
'The world becomes beautiful when your phone connects, my deep grief leaves'

(5.24) معزتك ماكلمه بتقال ولا رساله فى جوال معزتك كلمه تهز الجبال
ma'azatak ma kelima bitgaal walla risaala fi **juwaal** ma'azatak kelima tahiz al-jibaal
'Your value, no word can express, nor a message in a mobile, your value is the word that shakes mountains'

The poetic tradition, therefore influences the shape and content of these messages but the electronic interactive function of these messages in turn becomes a poetic theme itself. In order to make sense of this, one must be familiar with the paradigm of communication exchange, 'keeping in touch' which is the model into which new words and new means of communication are inserted. There must be two people interacting, and experiencing a loss because of the distance between them, the remedy of which is communication, or, as we saw above, memory. The words connection *ittiSaal* and phone *haatif*, *jawaal*, are used analogously for the carrier of meaning in earlier exchanges: the word *kelima*, letter (alphabetic) *al huruuf*, and letter (postal) *jawaab*, writing *kitaaba*. Interestingly, the words *haatif* 'phone' and *jawaal* 'mobile' are words from Modern Standard Arabic which are used synonymously with more colloquial terms from English *tilifoon* and *mobaayil*, or from slang *kalaama* 'talker'. As I will discuss below, choosing the Modern Standard Arabic term in place of a colloquial one is probably not arbitrary, but rather shows how register choice may be indexical with Alessandro's notions of poetry, as a context for demonstrating prestige. The metapragmatics of missing, therefore modernize, with the new means of connection, the 'keeping in touch' goes electronic, which, in turn, feeds into the poetry of that medium. Another two examples of electronic elements are *rasiid* 'credit' and *khabar 'aagil* 'tickertape' which buzzes across the TV screen:

(5.25) قاسى قلبك وبتعب القلب البريده لا رسائل لا دقائق من رصيدك ما بعاتبك وما بلومك بس بريدك .
gaasi gelbak wa bita'ab al-gelb al-biriidu la rasaayil la dagaayig min **raSiidak** ma ba'atbak u ma baluumak bas bariidak

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'Unkind is your heart and the heart that loves it tires. No message, no minute from your credit but I don't reproach or blame you, just, I love you'

(5.26) لو كان القنوات تذيع أخبار المشتاقين لكان اشتياقى فى كل ثانيه خبر عاجل
low kaan al-ghanawaat tzi' akhbaar al-mushtaagiin likaan ishtiaagi fi kul saania **khabar 'aajil**
'If the channel broadcast the news of those who missed their loved ones, my missed (ones) will appear every second in a tickertape'

Framing messages

One interviewee told me that originality was not important, but that it should be heartfelt and when seeing my collection of SMS poetry, asked me if he could copy or use some of the poems, which, when he sends them, will require that he modify them for the intended recipient. In order to make the texts personal, small details must be changed such as gender or plurality, or words are substituted. The following message, taken from Alessandro's inbox is an example of an extremely common strategy, that of tailoring the message, whatever its source, with a greeting. This one is written in *fuSHa*, followed by the standard holiday greeting in SCA, *kulu sana wa inti tayyiba* 'every year and you are well'.

(5.27) فى زحام الاعوام يمضي عام تلو عام فى كل عام حقائق واحلام وانا حلمى ان اركى بخيرفى كل عام (وكل سنه وانتى طيبه
fi ziHaam al-a'awaam yamDi 'aam tilwa 'aam fi kul 'aam Haqaa'iq wa aHlaam wa ana Helmi an araki be-khair fi kuli 'aam wa kulu sana winti Tayyiba
'In the crowded years, passing one after another, every year carries truth and dreams, my dream is to see you well in every year, every year and you are well'

The poem ends with the repetition of a phrase, 'see you well in every year, every year and you are well', where the first phrase is in *fuSHa* and the second phrase is in SCA. What does this mean to Alessandro who sent the message and the person receiving this message? To what extent is the sender assuming emotional responsibility for it, and how, if at all, is it personal? These questions can be answered narrowly, via the situated context of an exchange, or broadly, by studying the social macrostructures that govern the context for that exchange. I will look at both perspectives as they are interrelated.

According to Goffman's "frame analysis", people signal their definition of a situation through framing, i.e. how it is contextualized or how meaning is constructed in interaction. Footing, (discussed briefly in Chapter 3), is one way that speakers align themselves with respect to the other person, thereby co-constructing a shared frame. Within frames, speakers (in this case, texters) adopt different performances depending on how committed they are to the text, how accountable or agentive, they want to be and what social roles they want to play (positioning). Goffman subdivided the idea of a speaker into different performance types, of relevance here are the "author" (person creating the utterance), "principal" (per-

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son assuming emotional responsibility for the utterance) and the "animator" (person relaying the utterance created by someone else). In the poem in (5.27), above, the sender takes on the performance of animator of the message, not taking emotional responsibility for the creation of the *fuSHa* portion of the text. He probably did not write it because 1) it is very rare for people to make original compositions in *fuSHa*, 2) there is an unnatural repetition of the greeting and 3) the code-switch into SCA shows the actual function of the poem, which is to greet the recipient. This message is in a greeting frame, where the greeting portion (in SCA) is the work of the "author", while the poetic portion is being animated by the sender but not authored. In this way, the poem is discreetly marked as generic, and its sender exempt from being the author of the emotional content.

In many of these poems, in fact, the recipient is not referred to directly, but inferred with generic phrases such as 'appreciated people', 'precious people', 'those who are missed' etc. These passive constructions signal emotional distance between sender and receiver, as does the plural form of *mushtaagiin* 'you are missed' as opposed to *mushtaag leek* 'I miss you'. Manipulations such as these manage the emotional distance between the interactants.

(5.28) بختصر عزب الكلام احلى الجمل كل الشعور فى كلمتين (اشتقت ليك)
bakhtaSir 'azb al-kalaam aHla al-jumal kul al sha'ur fi kelimaateen (ishtiqta leek)
'I summarize nice talk and sweet sentences, all feeling in two words (I miss you)'

The code-switch from *fuSHa* into SCA here similarly marks a text as "animated" rather than "authored", but in a more intimate way, showing how a "principal" is enacted, where the sender may not be the author but is assuming responsibility for the sentiment in the words. The use of the active verb, and first person pronoun shows that the sender is responsible for that part of the text.

Both of these greeting frames most likely contextualize an anonymous text as being directed at a person, but not designed for the person. The code-switch into SCA is aligning the poem for a Sudanese speaker. The messages straddle the larger Arabic world on the one hand, and the Sudanese context, and therefore are positioned for someone capable in both. The Sudanese greeting says 'We are both of the same place, and I'm doing my duty of 'keeping in touch' by sending this message'.

Adding onto and reworking

In the next two examples, a poem in *fuSHa* (5.29) and a Sudanese song (5.30) are added onto and reworked by the sender:

(5.29) لك سلام من قلب يحبك ولك تحيه من روح تودك ولك رساله من نفس تعزك .تتصل ما تتصل نحبك .ترسل ما ترسل
نحبك .مشغول فاضى نحبك زعلان راضى نحبك تحبنا ما تحبنا نحبك

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laka salaam min qelib yaHibbak wa laka tahiya min ruuH tawiddak wa laka risaala min nafis ta'izzak. tataSil ma tataSil naHibbak. tarassil ma tarassil naHibbak. mashghuul faaDi nahibbak za'laan raaDi naHibbak taHibbna ma taHibbna naHibbak
'Peace to you from the heart that loves you and greetings from the soul that adores you and a message from the self that values you. Communicate don't communicate, we love you. Write, don't write, we love you. Busy, free, we love you, angry, not angry, we love you, love us don't love us, we love you'

The portion added on to the original in *fuSHa* (underlined) maintains the rhyme scheme of the copied part, but is marked by a switch into SCA as well as a shift from third person pronouns 'he/it' to third person plural 'we', referring to the author of this portion. Here as in (5.28), we see how this anonymous poem is personalized and in the process undergoes a shift which recenters this text to an emotional statement coming from the sender, the principal.

In the next example, a popular Sudanese song by Zayden Ibrahim is not only added onto but reworked:

(5.30) لو احبك عمرى كلو برضو شايف ما كفايه اصلى فى حبك غرقته وناوى اغرق للنهايه
low aHibbik 'amri kulu barDu shaayif ma kifaaya aSli fi Hubbak ghiriqta wa naawi aghraq lil-nihaaya
'If I love you all my life also I see it's not enough, in fact I sank into your love and I intend to go deep to the end'

Compare with the original lyrics of this song: *low aHibbik ana al 'amri kulu barDu shaa'ir ma kafaani,* 'If I love you all my life too, I feel it will not satisfy me'. The sender of this message is taking over the responsibility of authorship here, by replacing words (*shaa'ir* with *shaayif*), and adding more. The entire message is in SCA, the language of intimacy.

(Re-)writing poetry min raasi 'from my head'

In a final type of intertexuality, I discuss what people claim is "original" poetry, the themes, words and patterns continues to draw from other poems. Furthermore, many or even most of these poems are written in a specific register, one which exists in-between the impersonal formality of *fuSHa* and the folkloric Colloquial Sudanese.

Compare the following two poems from Alessandro's sent messages. The first was sent to 'Ali and the second to 'Abdu, friends of Alessandro, on May 3rd and 4th of 2008.

(5.31) اعيش عمرى بدون الناس وابيع عمرى بدون احساس عشانك يا اعز الناس؟؟؟
a'iish 'amri biduun al-naas wa abii' 'amri biduun iHsaas 'ashaanak ya a'zza al-naas ???
'I live my life without people and sell my life without feeling for you because of you most precious person ???'

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(5.32) لو حبوني كل الناس ووزنوني بالالماس مابتغير الاحساس انتي عندى الاساس؟؟؟؟
low Habuuni kul al-naas wa wazanuuni bal al-maas ma bitghaayir al-iHsaas inti 'indi al-asaas ????
'If all people loved me and weighed me with diamonds the feeling doesn't change towards you, you are my base ????'

The English translations are not very revealing here but if you read the Arabic or the transliteration, it is clear that there is a rhyme scheme and stress pattern that both of these poems adhere to based on the word *naas* 'people'. The poem in (5.31) is apparently based on a Sudanese poem of the same rhyme scheme, but is not an exact quote of the lyrics. This is one of many examples of poems which closely resemble each other, if not in structure at least in words and themes. Words, phrases, rhyme schemes are taken and reused in new formulations which are meant to be heartfelt and at the same time, evoke the familiar. Here, Alessandro is assuming full authorship, as the person who designs the text. He draws from previous knowledge of poetic forms and styles, and produces an original text.

As I have demonstrated above, the tailoring of poems to the Sudanese context, the framing of forwards with standardized colloquial greetings, the reworking and rewriting of intertextual messages for personal use all function to recontextualize, to pragmatically alter the message for locally or individually relevant use. These strategies evoke a shared identity, history, folklore, and are designed for inclusivity, a means for the creation of belonging to a *Sudanese* community. These messages perform the function of 'keeping in touch' and many, through framing, are an extension of oral communicative style.

However, another recontextualization strategy of Alessandro's poems and, in fact, most of the poems in the corpus, concerns the register they are written in. We have seen that Alessandro's poems are sent in *fuSHa* (5.33) below, and in Sudanese Colloquial (5.34). However, the majority of poems that I found in the data, Alessandro's or otherwise, were composed in a third register[9], which is an elite form of SCA or an intermediate register which I will call Elevated Khartoum Arabic[10] (EKA) following Freeman's (1996) classifications as in (5.35):

(5.33) عزرا رسالتى كانت لبائع الورد ولكن يبدو انها وصلت للورد نفسه
'a**z**raan risaalati kaanat libaa'i' al-ward walaakin yabdu annaha waSalat lil-warid nafsu
'Sorry my message was to buy a flower but it seems to have arrived to the flower itself'

9 Other colloquial Arabic-speaking populations in diglossic relation with Classical Arabic, exhibit an elevated colloquial register (Freeman 1996).

10 Text written in Elevated Khartoum Arabic (EKA) will be transliterated in bold.

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(5.34) ثانيه ثانيه ولحظه لحظه الشوق نعدو قلنا يمكن مره نوصل حروف عدو
saaniya saaniya wa laHaza laHaza al-shooq na'idu gulna yimkin mara nawSal Huruuf 'aduu
'Second, second, moment, moment we count the missing so that one day we may be able to count all its letters'

(5.35) اهديك شمعه تدفيك وقلب يموت فيك ورموش تغطيك وعيون تبيع الدنيا وتشتريك !
ahdiik sham'a tadafiik wa gelb yamuut fiik wa rumuush taghatiik wa ayuun tabii al-dunya wa tashtariik
'I give you a candle to warm you and a hear to die for you and an eyelash to cover you and eyes to sell the world and buy you'

Messages (5.34) and (5.35) Alessandro wrote himself, while (5.33), written in *fuSHa,* aside from the dialectical spelling of <*z*>*,* he took from another source. As I have shown in Chapter 3, it is common to use SCA for Sudanese greetings and certain poems with specific folkloric elements, and it is common to find messages from Arabic poetry written in CA. Example (5.35), however, represents the majority of poetic messages that I find not only in Alessandro's data but across all the data. It formally exists in between CA and SCA, an intermediate elite form of SCA that has been stripped of obvious colloquialisms, retaining only the bivalent vocabulary, where words can equally belong to CA or SCA, but lack the full grammar of CA. A "Middle Arabic"[11] has been observed in other places but it is not agreed on whether it is a set of ad hoc strategies with lots of diglossic-switching and mixing or a more stable system (Freeman 1996). In the case of text-messaging, such an intermediate register is a common medium of expression.[12] But, what purpose does it serve in relation to the writing or re-writing of SMS poetry? How is this register creating alignment between the sender and the receiver and how is the author positioning himself with respect to the recipient? Moreover, why are most of the poetic messages composed in this register?

I can partly answer these questions by explaining how I discovered it. I worked closely with my research assistant, Rashid, who had studied both Arabic and English literature, in the translation of these messages. Rashid, I knew, is proud of his knowledge of *fuSHa*, and an admirer of Arabic literature. He classified those that I now call EKA as SCA, since SCA is a more flexible medium, and grouping them with those written in CA was impossible. Later, I met with Alessandro and his sister and while reviewing these messages, asked him about

11 Differing between EKA, CA and SCA is in practice difficult and a matter of degree, since CA is rarely error free, and written poetic SCA is often too awkwardly formal to be considered street language.

12 It is beyond the scope of this research to conduct a linguistic analysis of EKA, although it is an important task. For the present study, rather, I relied on the judgments of native speakers, both Rashid, my assistant, Dr. Al-Siddiq at the University of Khartoum, and several others with whom I consulted.

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his choice of writing in SCA. He laughed and seemed shocked by my question, and corrected me saying that he had written them in *fuSHa*, and, used examples of words in the poems to explain it to me. I didn't argue with him as he is not wrong. Sudanese is a dialect, which uses many bivalent words from Classical Arabic synonymously with Sudanese words, and depending on the need for precision and personal style. However, the syntax is not as complete as that of CA. Alessandro acknowledged the use of SCA for those such as (5.34), but not (5.35). This seems to represent a strong ideological trend in Arabic-speaking places, that when writing in a poetic style, Classical Arabic is the appropriate language, the mark of sophistication and of religious faith. This genre of Arabic inspired poetry, while being original poetry, is an intertextual collection of bits and pieces of language drawn from an education in Arabic poetry, and from experience as a recipient of poetry, and EKA is an elite form of Sudanese speech which emerged along with Alessandro's desire to use CA in his writing, and perhaps speech, but, like most Sudanese, lacks the technical skills in CA to use it fluently. Such a formal use somewhat contradicts the context of the text-message as an informal setting, a site for private affective language and the strategies of recontextualization that bring anonymous poems into a Sudanese framework. Rather, it adheres to the traditional alignment of the prestige language with a written poetic form.

Intertextuality in this data reveals high density, high frequency access to and appropriation of linguistic forms that are continually being drawn on, in everyday poetry texting. I argued that poetic messages draw from repeated themes, copied and forwarded messages, and reused language formulas. Such "used" material in the highly affective language of interpersonal texting seems paradoxical in that such personal language is in fact, highly impersonal. In the next section, I argue that the recontextualization of messages through code choice, which I have shown to render them personally meaningful, also has larger consequences as the wide-spread circulation of these messages makes the private text, a part of public space, where the content and form of these messages become part of collective knowledge through popular participation.

Recontextualization and the public imagination

The text message, as a peculiar form of media, has a particular relationship to its users, one which allows for widespread engagement, where the stuff of private interaction becomes public material. Following Barber's (2007: 139) usage, a public is "an audience of a distinctive kind. It is an audience whose members are not known to the speaker/composer of the text, and not necessarily present, but still addressed simultaneously, and imagined as a collectivity". As I discussed in Chapter 1 and in a previous section of this chapter, mass media, as a modern

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means of communication and an instrument of the nation-state, is recognized as one of the most powerful ways of uniting people as a "public". And, one of the claims about small media, as opposed to mass media is their ability to create new kinds of publics, both of these new possibilities coming from changes in technology.

In Habermas' (1992) notion of "public sphere", the 18th century public emerged through a more popular engagement with art as it became more accessible through the press, art galleries, concerts and other "public" places. Art, therefore, moved outside of patronage circles, and into the world of equal access via consumption. Anderson's (1991) "print capitalism" depicted how texts, the newspaper and the novel, evoked a collective sense of shared history through the use of standardized language, and familiar place names. By reconstructing in print the social milieu shared between authors and readers, a feeling of belonging was possible, uniting people by way of shared language, place and feeling of membership to a community. Habermas' "public sphere" and Anderson's "imagined community", while problematic because they use symbols of collectivity controlled and designed by elite producers, politicians and capitalists, are nonetheless useful to the present study in showing how belonging to a collectivity is possible via some degree of common participation. As I detailed earlier, producers of poetry and song in the Sudan came from the Khartoum elite, and wrote for a very small literate audience. Later with the advent of centralized radio in Omdurman, this genre became the standard for popular *Haqiiba*-based music, the Omdurman Song, moving this art form out of elite circles and into the wider public, which may have similarly facilitated a sense of belonging to the sociocultural mainstream in Khartoum, through the popular consumption of a typically "*Sudanese*" genre of music. Sudanese people, then, were likely able to imagine themselves as part of a collectivity by way of shared popular music.

Both the concepts of "public sphere" and "imagined community" are the result of technological innovations, the widespread distribution of print made possible by print mercantile then industrial capitalism. But changing technologies affect modes of textual production, and alter how a public is constructed. As I described earlier, small media are technologies that facilitate public space that is participatory and performative. Rather than passive modes of participation, such as imagination, or appreciation, such as is possible via print or radio, text message poetry illustrates active engagement with the art form. Receivers take their involvement even further than simply consuming them; they appropriate texts, modify them, forward them as "animators", or mimic them, often absorbing them as "authors", and taking emotional responsibility for them as "principals". Differently from traditional notions of audience or public, texters are not a concrete entity, nor an undifferentiated mass, equal receivers of a top-down media event.

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Rather, people are individuals and recipients of private messages, intertextually linked to a common storehouse of poetic language. The recycling of poetic discourse forges a collectivity by way of shared experience as receivers and senders. Private texts go public as they are sent and forwarded, so that any number of people is exposed to a particular poetic formulation. In turn, the widespread exposure to such frequently used formulations encourages repetitive engagement.

Different from the vertical functions of mass media, it is the lateral interactions which facilitate a sense of collective belonging. The recontextualization of poetic language essentially blurs the distinction between senders and receivers of media messages, as writers receive and receivers continually copy, individualize, write or re-write messages. As Barber (1997: 538) says on African popular culture, "production and reception appear as moments in a cycle rather than two poles at opposite ends of a process (…) in a sense all popular culture in Africa (…) is also a form of reception, for it is the means by which ideas are domesticated and reconsumed". Breckenridge (2000) identified a common practice of writing love letters among migrant workers and their families in South Africa, who, due to poor literacy, hired literates to read and write the letters, curiously rendering a private intimate genre, into a collaborative one. He says that such an in-between space sits well with the primarily oral cultural tradition of Southern Africans. I can draw the same analogy in the Sudanese context. Traditionally, the oral genres of poem or song, *Haqiiba* or *dobeet*, are meant to be public, meant to be heard by all. This may help explain poetry's private to public direction in popular texting. Its compatibility with orality is reflected in the semi-oral style, the use of SCA and greetings etc., a genre resistant to being eternalized in writing. On the other hand, the use of Classical Arabic and EKA draw the poetic message back into the formal written zone. Such ambiguity helps explain the fuzzy space where it exists, neither entirely private nor completely public, but a collaborative work, destined for individuals, but with many authors and editors. It is neither prestigious and formal nor as relaxed as oral spoken language. It exhibits a kind of literacy, an intermediate hybrid style, existing in between the super Classical Arabic literacy of the religious *'ulama* and the non-literacy of a colloquial form that is otherwise never written.

These poems dissolve the opposition between consumers and producers, since, while many poems do originate as texts from books or poems, some from foreign origins, some from local ones, referencing and authenticity are not a concern, as people store poems in their inbox for future use, or request specific poems from friends. Some even subscribe to a message service, which sends generic messages or jokes about science or religion for a small price, which are then immediately sent into circulation such that the original source is instantly lost on

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most of its recipients. I have presented poems as the prototypical type of forwarded message, but other genres of text are copied from many sources, some from globalized media, which, as they are copied and sent locally, bring Sudanese people into transnational circuits. Popular culture such as music, jokes, puzzles or proverbs are found, as are religious sayings and political statements. The following two examples serve to illustrate the connectedness between Sudan and the larger Arabic-speaking world, as these messages are funneled into the forwarding pattern.

The following is a puzzle combined with a Syrian pop song by Asalla Nasri, where the reader has to delete all the (sh) sounds to get the meaning:

(5.36) شيشمشيشن الشلشه شيشحشبشك شحشب ملشا شلشو حشد شوشه ملحوظه:احزف الشينات
shiishmishiishin al-shaalsha shiishHashbashik shaHshab malsha shalshu Hashd shuusha malHuuza: aHzif al-shiinaat
'By God, I love you a lot without limit, note: delete the sh'

This next forward was sent in early January 2009 when Israel was launching an attack in the Gaza strip, inciting anger across the Arab and Muslim world. As the Sudanese are fellow Muslims, they felt a religious duty to recite from the Qur'an in an act of solidarity with the Palestinians:

(5.37) اهل غزة يطلبون قراءة سورة الفاتحه الليله بنيه النصر ان شاء الله
ahal ghaza yaTlubuun qira'at suurat al-faatiHa al-leela biniyaat al-naSr insha'allah
'The people of Gaza need us to read from the sura of al-Fatiha tonight, with the intention of great victory inshallah'

Examples such as these show how narrow interactions can have much broader scope. Through this kind of popular engagement, forwarding, as well as rewriting and resending, receivers becomes audiences, the private becomes public, and interpersonal sentiments become common sympathies. As Barber (2007: 139) says, "(…) specific forms of address to dispersed audiences of readers can also a play a part in constituting new forms of sociality (…) developing people's awareness of their common condition".

As I discussed earlier, poetic texting is a practice reserved for the lower and middle classes. It is a modern incarnation of an earlier practice of poetic letter-writing which took as inspiration the popular genre of music, the Omdurman Song, based on *Haqiiba* poetry and song. This came out of an elite nationalist movement based on the intertwined elements of *Haqiiba* based in rural Sufi chants, indigenous Northern Sudanese styles and Arab-Islamic themes and language varieties. But the prevalence of Elevated Khartoum Arabic, code-switching and mixing with *fuSHa*, the re-contextualization strategies, shows how writers and senders conceptualize their receivers, how they 'imagine' poetry to be

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written. Its use attests to how ideologies of language influence practice. We might expect poems inspired by or copied from the Arabic poetry tradition to be written in Classical Arabic and poems inspired or copied from the Sudanese folkloric poetry to be written in Sudanese Colloquial Arabic. However, while this does occur, the overwhelming majority of poems are neither identifiable by *fuSHa* nor SCA, but by EKA. Language choice is not necessarily an indicator of origin, especially since many of the poems are written or later reworked from memory. Therefore, language and register choice is one way that people recontextualize, render meaningful, the messages they send.

Messages inspired by both Classical Arabic and Qur'anic themes as well as folkloric Sudanese ones come out in this middle register, essentially neutralizing the cultural origins of the message and recasting it in the Arabic "tradition". This message is likely such an example, written in EKA, but inspired by a Sudanese source:

(5.38) من حزن الشوق أتوجع لانك غبت يا غالى صحيح لدغ النحل يوجع لكن العسل غالى.
min Huzn al-shooq atawja' liannaka ghibti ya ghaali SaHiiH ladgh al-naHal yuuja' laakin al-'asal ghaali
'I am suffering from the missing sadness because you, precious, are absent. True, the sting of the bee hurts but the honey is precious'

The poetic movement of earlier nationalist Sudanese writers, who inspired the popular genre and aesthestic of *Haqiiba* as being a "Sudanese" art form, is being rewritten by some such as Alessandro as an Arabic art form through the use of EKA. What was so important to early nationalist writers, was that the poems be popularly accessible, reflect a Sudanese history, and sentiment. However, many examples of recontextualization show that CA poetry is brought into the Sudanese context through framing or reworking, or, the original semi-oral quality of written Sudanese Colloquial Arabic as well as the theme inspired by Sudanese folklore, may be contested by the use of EKA. The lower and middle classes and the socially marginalized Nuba are reinventing an Arabic tradition by re-writing a Sudanese tradition in a new "traditional" way, based on the Arabic poetic tradition and a common imagination of belonging to the Arabic-speaking world.

High-frequency texting, decontextualization and recontextualization, allows for private ideas to go public, where a wider producer base creates public space, a forum for the mutual creation of meaning. Messages are designed for individuals, and in their personalization, individuals are identified as belonging to a shared community of interaction, where certain speech forms recur. Through framing, people signal to each other how they want their words to be understood. The strategy is interpersonal, based on a person-to-person exchange, and as people absorb and reuse words, they claim authority over those words, they are recontextualized. The force of popular participation is clear, as the reworking and

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rewriting of texts based on selective choices of theme or language, are left to individuals. And, as Alessandro's poems illustrated, language choices in particular are glossing over sources, essentially rewriting its origins through dialect choice in order to affiliate his writings with the larger Arabic-speaking community.

Sudanese community is an 'imagined community'

In "Redefining Muslim Publics", Eickelman & Anderson (2003) argue for the concept of a "Muslim Public Sphere", where new media are contributing to the emergence of a public space that is subversive and global: outside the domain of state control, discursive: contesting Islamic authority, and religious: as ordinary Muslims are increasingly invoking Islam in many aspects of life. In the present study, such a "community", is applicable, as it is redefined through the use of EKA and the use of CA poetry and language as well, emerging from a common sense of belonging to a larger Arab-Islamic entity, i.e. Arabization. Such a community can only exists in part through imagination, since it clearly does not hold up spatially; even though most texting occurs at the national or local level, its Arabic expression has more in common with the Arab-Islamic world than with the diverse cultural make-up of Sudan. Such a community is not defined by ethnic identity so much as a religious and cultural one. Alessandro, a Nuba person, who does not claim to be Arab, coming from a non-Arabic non-Muslim group of people, nonetheless speaks Arabic and can participate as well as any other Sudanese. Thus the practice of writing and sending colloquial text-message poetry is an aspect of Sudanese identity, and it seems plausible to suggest that writing poetry in EKA is part of a *local* Arabization trend as well, redefining what is meant by "Sudanese" at a popular rather than elite level.

However, an Arab-Muslim identity is one aspect of what constitutes a national Sudanese identity, and cannot be differentiated from it, as Northern Sudan claims to be both Sudanese and Arab-Muslim, culturally. As mass media such as TV and radio selected and used *fuSHa* as the national language over any other language, a sense of national identity and Arabic and Islamic "tradition" was declared for Northern Sudan. It may be no surprise, therefore, that this same Arabic-speaking identity is reproduced, although from the bottom-up. What does it mean, though, if small media in this case, only serves to re-enact the model set forth by the nation-state? Does the concept of "public sphere" in the sense of an open civil society outside of political and religious authority mean anything? Is there any public space for negotiation of a Northern Sudanese cultural and religious identity that is not put forth by the Government? As we saw in Chapter 4, Nuba students are not using the communicative possibilities of mobile phones to contest the linguistic or cultural mainstream. Here we see that Alessandro and

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other Nuba students are using poetry as a tool for cultural integration. Therefore, the data presented here problematizes Anderson's "imagined community". People are participants in a practice that is guided by current inequalities in the Sudan. That the Nuba adopt the poetic tradition is an example, not of homogenization and unity so much as the reproduction of social inequality (Bourdieu 1991), where the feeling of marginalization with respect to the Arab elite provides the ideological basis for imitating the dominant form.

In this chapter I have argued the mobile phone, as a modern digital instrument capable of reproducing poetic language across networks of texters, also cuts people off from the sources of those texts. We might suggest that the phone by bringing an elite genre into popular use, that Sudanese authenticity is being lost. However, poetry exchange predates the phone, and intertextual uses of it were also common before the phone. In fact, in the decades before the mobile phone, poetry writing and exchange seemed in decline, as most users in their 30s now, do not remember having written letters to each other past high school. The mobile phone has enabled a popular revival of this cultural practice, one which, has taken a certain direction, selectively remaking an older cultural practice in a modern way, "inventing tradition" (Ranger 1983) through the choices of individuals. During holidays such as Ramadan or *'aid al-adha*, a burst of text-messaging ensues, much of which is religious in nature, and many of these are so common that it seems they all came from the same source. Such popular engagement brings people together both at the national level and across the Muslim world.

The Islamic tradition is not so much a factual tradition made of static unchanging elements as a Discursive one (Asad 1986), based on present evaluations of the past. Therefore, the "tradition" of poetry writing and sending is sustainable through continued remaking from the perspective of the participants and performers. What is meant by a Sudanese identity, as shown through the texting practices of Alessandro and others is in constant revision. What was meant by "tradition" to the early *Haqiiba* poets and nationalists, and later the ARABIZATION and ISLAMIZATION policies of the Government, was no more "traditional" than the current texting practice, the former having been inspired by the earlier Islamic practices of Sufis, and indigenous Nubian folksongs, which now are generically labeled "Sudanese" traditions, the latter by a return to "authentic" Islam, that which comes from Saudi Arabia. All of these influences are aspects of the Sudanese experience, but they scarcely skim the surface of the wealth and breadth of practices and traditions which existed and continue to exist in Sudan.

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6

Love in the time of mobility: Careful appropriations and courtship negotiations

Bahar to Randa, and Randa to Bahar:

(6) a بحبك مووووت يا..... خليها مستورة.. حبيبو وبس
baHibbik muuuut ya ….. khalliiha mastuura Habiibu u bas
'I love you to death my ….. leave it as a secret my lover and that's it'

b بحبك مووووت يا أجمل وأصدق حبيب ...بمووووت فيك
baHibbak muuuut ya ajmal wa aSdag Habiib ….bamuuut fiik
'I love you to death you most beautiful and faithful lover ….. I die for you'

The exchange between Randa and Bahar above is a blatant example of the way that young people in Sudan are defying the Islamic moral Discourse on unmarried people and the prescribed rules of courtship with the privacy afforded by the mobile phone. Randa provided these examples to me, but did not return for an interview. I was able to glean that they were the only two messages in her phone, and were doomed to deletion shortly thereafter for fear of being found by someone. She does not save messages for the reason that her parents "would kill her" if they found such messages. I now turn to another young woman, with whom I spent a lot of time, and whose story and openness can better relate the changing nature of courtship and the role of mobile communication.

Leila's story

I first met Leila Hamad, who was to be my host sister, in the street outside her house in Amarat. She came out to guide me to her house wearing a black '*abaya* 'cloak' and black *tarHa* 'scarf'. The *'abaya* is a floor length overgarment covering the whole body except the face, feet and hands. It is the standard form of traditional Islamic dress in the Arabian peninsula and wearing it is even legally

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enforced in Saudi Arabia. In Sudan, this style of dress is not the norm although it is increasingly common, and associated with a new type of Islamic religiosity among young women. Although I found Leila's cloak intimidating, her social demeanor and chatty manner made her very approachable, and as she led me into the house, directly to the girls' bedroom, she instantly threw off her '*abaya* and *tarHa* revealing jeans and a t-shirt, and hair in disarray; I felt at ease.

Leila apologized for not being able to eat with me that day as she was leaving on a work trip to Dubai and would be back the next day. She works for Sudan Airways as a flight attendant. With a salary of 500 US Dollars a month, at age 26, is the main source of income for her family. Her father used to work in the airline industry in Saudi Arabia, but is ill now and retired and her mother also does not work as she has diabetes. Leila is the second of three daughters. The eldest, Ashwag, is recently married, and the youngest, Sara, works at a shipping company. They have four younger brothers, with whom I barely interacted as they occupied the male half of the house, and whose names I never properly memorized.

In addition to her part-time job, Leila is also a student at the University of Khartoum's Faculty of Agriculture, starting a Master's in Agricultural Science and therefore was quite busy. When she wasn't out visiting friends or running errands almost all of her time was spent in the girls' bedroom watching TV, talking with her mother and sisters or talking on the phone. Neither she nor the other women did very much domestic labour; most of the washing and cleaning was done by an Ethiopian woman who was paid to come twice a week. The family was in a better position financially in the past, and was able to employ a permanent housekeeper, but with the parents' illnesses, the quality of life they used to enjoy was no longer possible. The family had a car, but it was permanently broken, and the family could not afford to repair it.

Leila was designated as my personal companion and much of my time was spent talking with her or accompanying her on an errand. She socializes with a diverse group of friends, many of whom are boys with whom she has no romantic aspirations. They often meet for coffee or ice cream in a café or park, or, with the girls, spend an afternoon shopping or visiting at home. Leila spent a lot of time thinking about her future, and she sought my advice on this topic. She was tormented by the conflict between her dreams of pursuing an education in Agricultural Science in Europe and the obligation that she felt towards her family. Her cousins in the Netherlands were urging her to come knowing that opportunities in Sudan were limited. It was her responsibility to make sure her parents had an income, but being clever and independent-minded she also knew that she was capable of aspiring higher in life. Her parents also put pressure on her to stay in Sudan, emphasizing the need for her to continue working. Her

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mother, Sawsen, while proud of her daughter's talents and ambitions, couldn't bear the idea of being separated from her daughter for a long time.

Many of our conversations were about beauty, skin color and hair texture. Leila proudly asserts that her family is *ja'ali*, one of the dominant tribes of the Nile Valley, and one claiming Arab genealogy. She acknowledges that her origins are mixed African and Arab, but subscribes nonetheless to Arab beauty standards, with a preference for lighter skin and straighter hair, which are generally considered signs of beauty among Northern Sudanese women (Fabos 2008). One of her major preoccupations was her frizzy hair, which she couldn't seem to grow past shoulder length. She would often assert that her younger sister Sara was dark *suda* (in skin color) but had *sha'ar na'am* 'soft hair', while Leila was *aftaH* 'lighter' but had "African hair". She frequented a "hair doctor" about once a week and spent a lot of money on expensive hair products. Most important, she said proudly, were her facial features, a narrow nose, and small lips, features which distinguish her and her sisters definitively from Black Southerners.

Both Leila and Sara are *muHaajiba* 'Islamic dress-wearing', a term associated with a conservative Islamic clothing such as '*abaya*, or a veiling style, where the hair and neck are completely covered, following trends in Saudi Arabia. While this style of veiling is common among university students it is not the norm, which is a lightly draped scarf over the hair, thus distinguishing these girls as more religious. This style of dress, however, did not stop them from being fashionable as long as the proper layers were added to cover arms, neck and head. Sara returned from Dubai with a suitcase full of new clothes, many of which seemed completely out of sync with the *muHaajiba* style. I was offered a hot pink t-shirt with silver sequined letters that read "No Rules" and a floor-length stone-washed jean skirt, the irony of which was striking since such an outfit, properly worn, was far from being rule-free. Leila would sometimes refer to her family as "religious", meaning, that even in a Muslim society, there are degrees of religiosity, and her family is more conservative, in the new-fundamentalist sense. She and her mother and sisters all observed the daily prayers and fasting ritual and sometimes watched religious television. Sawsen grimaced at my purchasing some incense at a Sufi *dhikr* in Omdurman; Leila explained that 'mama doesn't approve of Sufi Islam'.

Concerns about finding someone to marry were a daily topic. Leila, at age 26, was already feeling her age, often saying that she was too old to find a husband. She had broken off two engagements because the guys just "weren't good enough". As a very independent young woman, Leila has specific expectations for a partner. She wants someone who will. In her words, *shaawini* 'communicate with me', *'atemmi 'aleey* 'take care of me', someone who is *razin* 'thoughtful' and *jad* 'serious', but also who respects her independence, is not jealous, but,

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moreover, she is looking for a love relationship. Naturally, her parents must accept him; he must be Muslim and come from an Arab tribe, preferably *ja'ali* like her own. However, Leila is not waiting for suitors to wander into her life, she is actively seeking one from among her own connections or even open to the possibility of meeting one in public. Once, she came home with the declaration that she was "in love"; she had just shared a rickshaw with a neighbour called Ahmed, whom she'd never met before, but happened to be going in the same direction. They'd hit it off in conversation and he romantically turned the rickshaw around in the street to get her number in an afterthought. When he called later that night Leila took the call immediately. Several days later, she deleted his number from her phone, complaining that he was playing with her, that he wasn't serious because he was not calling enough, but waiting for her to chase him. In another episode, a co-worker of hers declared that he wanted to marry her. She did not feel amorous towards him but was considering it anyway, until he sent her a series of messages saying that he missed her, but never actually called. It was important for her that he call in order to get to know her. Unlike many of her friends, she says, she does not chase guys, she'll happily delete any names from her phone if he does not insist on being with her, and getting to know her. As these anecdotes relate, she sees it as acceptable to socialize with boys, even those that she meets in public, as long as they are respectful towards her. On this, she and her mother disagree. In Sawsen's generation, male-female relationships, even unromantic ones were not permitted, seen as un-Islamic. She blames this new kind of "friendship" on exposure from TV, that in her day all they had was radio, and relationships were simple. It was ok to have a boy, she said, as long as it was just one; now girls can have two or three boyfriends, and there is "nothing you can do about it".

As the brief story above illustrates, Leila is a self-sufficient, socially independent young woman very much in charge of her life. As a *muHaajiba*, she respects the rules of self-presentation for Muslim women in public. She values the Arab aesthetic for beauty, lighter skin and straight hair. At the same time, through her work, her social network and her mobility in town, she is able to stretch the prescribed rules of interaction between men and women. Unlike many portrayals of young Muslim women, she is not a house-bound domestic victim of patriarchal conditions, but rather an active agent and maker of her own life. Especially significant is the way that she finds "space" to create interactions with men, showing that she believes herself responsible for finding a marriage partner, neither her father nor brother "guardians", which, is the "traditional" means for finding a partner. The mobile phone is instrumental in this chapter because it facilitates a means of interaction which disrupts the hierarchical order normally maintained between women and men on the one hand and between parents and

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children on the other in Sudan, putting young unmarried women at the bottom of both hierarchies. In the following discussions, I deal more with Discursive accounts about courtship rather than looking solely at the interpersonal discourse of textual data as I did in Chapter 5, although poetry is an important aspect of courtship. Textual data will form part of the story, as the exchange between Randa and Bahar (above) shows how SMS can be a discreet way to express romantic sentiment, but more relevant for my present argument are the ways the mobile phone, as a controversial new technology, allows for an extension of male-female interactions which are deemed "acceptable". These can be seen as appropriation strategies, where some take advantage of the new communicative privacy, others carefully avoid it alltogether. The ambiguous nature of text-message poetry, being neither entirely personal nor necessarily romantic has the double function of being very personal and romantic although the intent of the poem is not always clear. This ambiguity may also be understood as a strategy for maintaining Muslim respectability in male-female interactions.

Using my own ethnographic observations, I first describe the gendered nature of social space in Sudan today and with its historic precedent. I then discuss the influence of the new Islamist Discourse on women in the last two decades, how it exerts pressure on women to react either within or against such Discourse. I then present data on how young women function with respect to the Islamic Discourse as it concerns courtship and male-female interactions generally, and will argue that the mobile phone is a means for both conforming with and subverting it. It consequently can be analyzed, in either way, as a means for exerting control over one's life, a means for *autonomy*, such that gender boundaries do not always uphold. Rather, it is about the intersection of spaces. I discuss how the phone provides a new space of interaction to emerge, which can be classified neither as "private" nor as "public" according to standard divisions, but a semi-private fuzzy area in between. The intractability of phone interactions is causing moral distress, particularly among male "guardians", fathers and brothers, as they feel they can no longer control young women's interactions, a problem that is negatively directed at the mobile phone itself as well as women in public Discourse and private behaviour. Then, in light of increased pressure to conform to Islamic codes, women adopt a number of strategies, some which seem to defy such codes such as Randa and Bahar, some which conform, or a third strategy, where a careful path is negotiated between having a female Islamic identity and a social mobile lifestyle, where the phone is necessary but also instrumental in creating new social possibilities through talk. Its semi-private nature, in fact, along with a religious sensibility, legitimizes the increased autonomy of phone calls and texts. If managed carefully, it is deemed a respectful and even important way to interact

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with men and even find a husband, thereby a means for negotiating the Islamic Discourse on gender, courtship and public space.

Public vs. private in Sudan

The "public sphere" as I discussed in Chapter 5, has an added dimension in Muslim countries, that of the presence of religion in many or all aspects of life. In reference to Islamic public spheres, women are generally understood not to participate. Feminist scholarship in general but especially as it concerns the Arab-Muslim world has drawn the distinction between "public" space and "private" space, where men dominate the social, economic and political aspects of life, and women are relegated to confined domestic spaces, both socially and physically (Boddy 1989; Khatib-Chahidi 1993; Hale 1997; Nageeb 2004; Willemse 2007). While in much of the Arab and Muslim world, these spatial boundaries are not tenable, now, in Sudan, as I experienced it, the separation of genders in public and private places is nonetheless quite rigid in some situations, and especially in Discursive and ideological notions. It is viewed as both "traditionally" Sudanese but "authentically" Islamic. I will describe the segregation of space in the Sudanese households that I visited, as well as public space, but first I will briefly describe the history of this custom in Sudan in order to contextualize my data.

The word for the area of the Muslim household reserved for women, came into English from Turkish, Harem, which in turn was taken from the verb *Haraam* 'forbidden' in Arabic. It was the Ottoman Turks that brought the Harem culture to Sudan during the Turco-Egyptian occupation of the 19th century, but it became important in the early 20th century among the new elite in Khartoum, perhaps inspired by Mahdist conservatism (Abusabib 2004; Nageeb 2004) but also a new urban lifestyle, which changed the way women moved about their space. Rather than moving freely in small villages among known men, upper class women were confronted with the ethnically mixed urban environment and men whose accountability could not be verified.[1] Additionally, these women had slaves which meant that they did not have to leave the compound even for the smallest errand, only for weddings or holidays. In the 1920s and 30s gender segregation became common in weddings, where women were seated in partial seclusion away from the men, contrasting with rural celebrations in which women played a central role (Abusabib 2004).

The Harem, *al-bayt al-niswaan* 'the house of women' in Sudanese, in such an arrangement is at the back of the house, while the men's section, the *daywaan*

1 Karin Willemse class lecture, May 2009.

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'Diwan' is situated at the front of the house, including the entrance. According to interviews carried out by Nageeb (2004), women in the past viewed their private quarters as a special space protected from men, where feminine activities such as the *henna* 'dyed designs on the skin', *mashatt* 'hairbraiding' or *wadd'a* 'fortune telling' could comfortably take place, contradicting the contemporary popular understanding that Harems were places of confinement and subordination. In the words of one woman:

> "Everyone knew their limits. The girls know their place is not where the grown-up women have some women's business to do, boys who are about to reach puberty are there (…) with men, and men cannot come near the women's place. It is a shame to intermingle 'under the behinds of women' (…) we did not have men in between us like today." (Nageeb 2004: 23)

In this romanticized view, the Harem is a source of power for women, a complementary space rather than a subordinate one. It was reserved for women from families who could afford the luxury of seclusion. Such an interpretation in many ways supports my own observations about the women and the *bayt al-niswaan* in Leila's home, in which I lived for a month and will describe below.

Women's space in the Hamad family's home

The house of Ibrahim and Sawsen on 53rd Street in Amarat has two sitting rooms, two bedrooms, two bathrooms and a few more side rooms which were used for storage and also had extra beds, and a kitchen. The main area of the house and the entrance are separated from the girls' bedroom by a balcony, affording that space, the *bayt al-niswaan,* the most privacy. The main reception room has couches and chairs, a cupboard for silverware and nice tea sets. The second reception room had a TV, a few armchairs and was lined with several single beds. The remaining rooms also had several beds each, but outside the girls' room, I never saw who slept where. Sawsen slept on the balcony outside the girls' room and I, Leila, Sara, and often Ashwag, the eldest, slept inside the room. On my first visit to the Hamad house, I was treated as a guest, invited into the living room for drinks and greeted by the father, Ibrahim and mother, Sawsen. Following that first visit, I was then shown directly to the women's section of the house, and from then on took the habit of going straight from the front door to the right, across the balcony, to the portion of the house designated as private from men.

At mealtimes, a tray was brought in to the girls' room from which all the women ate communally, while the boys took their tray to one of the other bedrooms or living room. Although families, in the absence of guests, often will eat together at meals, since I was a guest, the genders separated during my time there and we ate separately. I was only invited twice to eat with the men, towards

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the end of my stay, when my status as "sister" or "daughter" in the family was forming and increased contact with the men seemed acceptable. Most of the time, however, I had no contact with the boys, only one of them greeted me in passing. If I went into the living room, I was expected to wear a *TarHa* 'scarf' over my *jellabiya* 'house dress' in mixed company. When I expressed disappointment at being expected to spend all my time and every meal in the bedroom, the reaction was surprise. In their understanding, it was so that the boys don't "bother" me – that they would leave me in peace and privacy. Similarly, that the boys didn't greet me struck me as rude, but it was explained that this was because I might be "too shy" to talk to them in my *jellabiya*. The isolation that I felt was explained as "respect" since I was a female guest. The girls did not have the same restrictions in front of their brothers. These rules applied for them when men outside the immediate family were present. In this case, a *towb* was necessary or a long skirt and long-sleeved shirt in addition to a head scarf.

What women do in public places is in some ways an extension of the divided household. At family events such as weddings, picnics in the park or large family gatherings, the men and women are seated separately. This is not true of truly "public" events where people do not know each other, e.g. concerts, lectures, restaurants. One significant difference between men and women is their presence and way of moving in public space. Mosques are segregated spaces, mostly frequented by men, who also pray in public areas such as the street or park, while women tend to do their prayers at home, or if away from home, in partial seclusion, behind a wall away from the street. Many outdoor cafes and tea-stands are dominated by men, who sit and smoke cigarettes or *sheesha* pipes. Many women smoke cigarettes and enjoy *sheesha* but this is forbidden in public, seen as sign of an immoral woman. I was denied a *sheesha* pipe in a café, the server's explanation being that it was a legal restriction and a matter of "national security".

Bodily behaviour and movement is another way men and women behave differently in public. I observed how women walked in public, usually with small straight steps in a clear direction with a fixed forward looking gaze. In contrast, men loiter, stand on corners with no obvious purpose, or walk slowly and comfortably. Once, when visiting a town in the north, I left the compound alone to go on a walk, only to be pursued by a local policeman on a donkey. He had come chasing after me to find out with whom I was staying, why I was out alone, and where I was going. My being unaccompanied and apparent lack of direction had worried him. Quite simply, in my own experience, men seem to belong out there in public space and women seem to be uninvited guests, who presence needs constant justification.

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The girls' room and the attached balcony, was another world, a space that encapsulated not only entirely different dressing habits, but physical and social behaviours. At the threshold to the room, the *TarHa*, *towb*, '*abaya* or skirt and blouse "public" wear was thrown off and replaced by a simple *jellabiya*; face make-up was also removed. I understood this to be necessary because it is simply too hot and ridiculous to wear street clothes inside the house, but it is also the domain of women. In this private space, women may sit differently and speak differently than in public. While context certainly gives way to a variety of behaviours, a common demure posture in mixed-company involves crossed ankles, and a slightly lowered gaze with hands folded in the lap. In private, anything goes. Women sit or lie comfortably in any direction, with legs splayed or dangling. Often, at my University office, if I was in the company of women only, one of them would close the door to the office so that they could remove their *TarHa*, and feel more relaxed, and before heading into the street, each of them would produce a compact foundation and mirror and apply a fresh layer of make-up.

Being married is a significant factor in how Sudanese women present themselves in public, adding a layer of complexity to the simple public/private dichotomy. Married women, with the male guardianship of her husband established, are allowed to be sexually attractive in the presence of other men. Once married, women are allowed and even expected to perform certain feminine behaviours both inside the Harem and outside. The most obvious are the wearing of a *towb* and the regular use of *Henna* on the hands and feet, as a mark of womanhood. A woman is also expected to wear gold jewelry to show her dowry in the marriage. And while many young women wear make-up, especially foundation and eye-liner, the use of *Homra* 'lipstick' is viewed badly in public as is *riiHa* 'perfume' until a woman is married. Other less obvious rituals include the *dukhaan* '(lit.) smoke' where a married woman sits over a dry sauna and the *Halaawa* '(lit.) sweet', body hair removal using sugar and lemon. Therefore, in addition to a spatial separation between men and women, there is also a generational distinction among the women inside the Harem, where the older, married women are the point of negotiation between the male realm and the female realm, the "intersex communicators" (Nageeb 2004).

Another important point is that the *bayt al-niswaan* has an internal order of its own which differs from its external one. Inside, I observed a neutralizing of age and status, where mothers and daughters and sisters were very close physically and emotionally, essentially dissolving the distinction between individual space, making the "private" space of the Harem semi-private in reality where, at least among women, the concept of privacy in the Western sense, linked with individuality (Ardener 1993) and personal possessions, hardly exists. The bedroom had

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four single *angareeb* 'traditional Sudanese woven bed', which all had identical sheets. Although Leila had a preferred bed in the middle of the room, the other women that slept there often appeared in different beds on different days, sometimes falling asleep in one and waking up in another[2]. Beds were cleared of all personal items during the day, and as such were not designated personal spaces as they are in a Western house. Household *towbs* were also interchangeable to a degree, where certain older *towbs* were communal among the women, such as when needed for praying, or running to the *dukkaan* 'shop'. Clothes, jewelry and make-up were shared among the women, although formally they did have separate shelves in the closet. In addition to the lack of individual physical space, there was a correlated lack of individual social space among the women. All events of the day, where I was, who I was with were inquired about upon returning home. If I was preparing to leave, a similar inquisition occurred. Sawsen and her daughters were very close, sharing details about boys they liked, and romantic meetings they had been on. The above description is as I experienced it, but I recognize that there is a great variation in Sudan as anywhere and certainly some households have fewer restrictions and different dynamics. However, in my later interviews with girls at the University, similar stories came out, that a daughter could tell her mother almost anything, even as it concerns clandestine meetings with boys. Mothers sympathize with their daughters and protect this information from fathers and brothers, taking the emotional side of the young women. I will return to this later as it concerns communications and control over the mobile phone.

As this description has shown, there are various kinds of boundaries between an individual, the semi-private Harem, the shared space of kin inside the house and "public" space. There are also hierarchies or layers of control, public > men of house > married women of house > unmarried women and girls, which condition behaviours differently with respect to the spatial boundaries, and a correlation between how a woman presents herself as she moves across these different spaces.

I've presented a somewhat conflicting portrayal of space, where women are, on the one hand, constrained by spatial restrictions, and on the other, feel privileged to have a special space of their own. While this may seem contradictory, I believe it is an accurate depiction of the situation as women experience it, a "double consciousness" (Boddy 1989) of both being aware of the structures that control them and acting within such structures. Many women justified gender

[2] It may be that my presence disrupted the normal order of things, but what was clear was that things were flexible, that visitors were common, and that not too much value was placed on personal space and beds.

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segregation to me in a positive way, that it protects them, and allows them to feel comfortable and less shy. Or, perhaps an explanation comes from the fact that most young women are, in fact, out in the world, either working or studying, and consequently are able to create many opportunities for increased social interaction. As I will discuss in the next section, the Harem of the early 20th century is quite different from the Harem of today, where an increase in social opportunity over the course of the century has in turn triggered a conservative backlash, where the current Islamic discourse is at odds with the lived reality of many women. As more pressure is exerted on women in the public space, this necessitates a constant fine-tuning of the way they present themselves publicly, embrace opportunities for strategic movement within this Discourse, and may also be a reason for them to seek refuge in the semi-private women's space or to expand the boundaries of such space and use it to their advantage. I will return to this in a later section.

Islamic fundamentalist discourse on women

While the Harem persisted at home, along with other "traditional" customs[3], over the course of the century, the role of women in public life changed significantly. In the colonial era, Sudanese men debated their ideas about women, some (lower class) men advocating "traditional" roles for women, i.e. to manage the household, raise children, obey the husband, ask permission to leave etc., others, the more educated elite, promoting an "emancipated" role as crucial to Sudan's national development (Sharkey 2003). This latter perspective became an important part of the nationalist movement, where literate, working and equal women were seen as crucial to the creation of a "modern" nation (Hale 1987; Sharkey 2003a). The state used the media (radio, TV and billboards) to spread this new perspective on women. Indeed, literacy improved dramatically in the 1960s; women achieved suffrage in 1961, had equality under civil law, the right to own property and conduct business and banking (Hale 1987). Over the decades following independence, women's roles diversified: they participated in professsional and political life, became educated, female seclusion was less rigid, and people wanted closer relations with spouses in married life (Sharkey 2003a). However, towards the end of the 70s and the end of the Nimeiri government leading up to the 1989 take-over of Al Bashir, conservative Islamism forestalled the progressive movement, and a process of "redomesticating" the woman took over the public Discourse on women.

[3] In the literature on women in the Sudan, the practices of female circumcision, scarring, lip tattooing, *zar* spirit possession, and veiling are among those practices referred to as women's "traditional" customs.

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In Chapter 2, I discussed the 1989 coup by Omar Al Bashir and the National Islamic Front (NIF) which has subsequently succeeded in creating an Islamist government and cultural revolution. The success of this take-over was due to a number of factors, mostly socio-economic, but its being sustained as an ideology is in part due to a strategy of public rhetoric that the NIF has adopted to ISLAMICIZE the public sphere. In both causes, women are of crucial importance, both as objects of reform and as collaborators with the NIF Government. Hale (1987) relates the economic crisis of the 1970s to a rise in Islamist ideology through the changing role of women in the workforce. She describes how high unemployment caused a massive out-migration of men at all levels of society, including those in the intellectual elite. It is here that women came in to fill the jobs of absent men, assuming more power than ever before, and disrupting the "natural order". The perceived threat to male power dynamics, in turn, spurred an extreme conservative reaction as to the "proper" place of Sudanese women. Targeting women as the object of reform, the Islamist government initiated a campaign to "authenticate" Islam by "purging women" of un-Islamic behaviour. Western-imposed capitalism was at fault, and women were to be the moral force to oppose this cultural incursion, responsible for socializing the nation with a new Islamic morality (Hale 1987; Bernal 1997; Nageeb 2004; Willemse 2007).

The new gender ideology portrayed a romantic image of women, as mothers, wives and daughters, charged with the maintenance of the house and the Islamic upbringing of their children. Public space, consequently, was to be reserved for men, and represent the face of Islam. With the Khartoum State Public Order Act, segregation of men and women was enforced, such as separate compartments in public transportation. Poor women in particular were targeted since they tended to be more present in the public, such as tea-sellers or prostitutes (Hale 1987; Nageeb 2004; Willemse 2007) and were jailed. Middle and upper class women were harassed about their dress in public and interrogated about the men they were with (Hale 1987).

This project was also a modernist one, since it represented the class interests of middle class entrepreneurs, used modern institutions (e.g. banks, commerce) and media to spread its agenda, and therefore pitted itself against "traditional" women's practices. In 1991, a decree was made by the Islamist military, "(…) that henceforth all Sudanese women will wear long black dresses to their ankles and black veil covering their head (…) those who disobey will be punished by whipping" (Hale 1987: 89) although this is not enforced. Curfews were imposed on weddings, such that all music had to be stopped by eleven at night. Other traditions were annulled, such as the hiding of the bride, and relegated to un-Islamic "tradition". I experienced a softer version of many of these measures, now not often enforced but by public pressure and disrespectful remarks. But in

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September 2009, as I was completing this thesis, a female Sudanese journalist and a group of her friends were awaiting trial for violating the Public Order Act following a group arrest for having worn pants in public (*New York Times* 2009). Occasional arrests, such as these, show that these issues are not far from the surface in a seemingly relaxed environment. At the University of Khartoum, it was required that I wear a long skirt in order to the pass the guards at the entrance, although this turned out to be negotiable. Also, men and women enter through separate gates. At the immigration office, I was questioned by one of the men who had seen me a day prior in the company of a male friend: 'who was this friend?', 'why was I with him?' etc.

The gender ideology put forth here, however, contradicted with the need for women to work such that women continue to be out and about in public life. Capitalist induced economic changes forced women to look with disdain on domestic roles as having value and who, according to Hale (1987), for the most part, enjoyed the independence that comes with working. The NIF allows for working women under certain circumstances, if the family needs money, for example, and as long she is properly dressed (*Ibid.*), but her working must be justified. Some professions, however, were dissuaded for women such as medicine and agricultural science, domains mostly dominated by men since they are powerful positions politically (*Ibid.*). Women's jobs should not threaten the authority of men, but rather, should be jobs that mirror domestic capacities such as care-giving and teaching. Willemse (2007) examined how single professional women have found a niche within this model and manage to create respectability as civil employees and teachers. Employing the Discourse set out by Islamists, they maintain their "mothering role" by being teachers, their "pure" status as unmarried women by living in a boarding house, and their Muslim modesty by wearing white *towbs*, the garment of government employees, behaviours signaling that they are daughters or wives to a metaphorical extension of men, the Government.

This latter example is important to this chapter, as it illustrates how the Islamic Discourse prescribes women's behaviour in relation to social space, and it shows how women manipulate this to their own benefit. Khatib-Chahidi (1993) found that women in Iran were able to frequent a network of places among their female relations, but to be in the presence of men that were non-kin, and therefore not an impediment to possible fornication, "fictive marriages" took place to permit the sharing of space. Other such measures to create the "fictive invisibility" (Ardener 1993) of women in the presence of men include wearing a head-covering, lowering one's gaze and being escorted by a "proper" guardian. Nageeb (2004) too discusses how women create opportunities to negotiate for more social space,

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by taking advantage of the margins of social interactions or building onto "protective" devices, which, in turn, allow for movement and respectability.

I turn now to a discussion of the Islamist moral Discourse as it concerns realms of male-female interaction and rules of courtship in particular in order to present ethnographic data that I collected on young women and men and how they maneuver within this Discourse. I then situate the role of the mobile phone in this context.

Courtship and social space: Maneuvering on the margins

In the early 20th century, "(…) a girl would be confined (to the household compound) immediately after puberty and would not see the street again until she was en route to her marriage house" (Abul'Azayim quoted by Sharkey 2003a: 60-61), says one Sudanese man in the colonial era. Young couples-to-be would attempt peeks at each other before marriage but a personal introduction was not allowed then. Leila ascertained that there is a provision in Islam that allowed one discerning look at a potential spouse before agreeing to marry. In contrast to Western-style "dating", where a young couple spends one-on-one time "getting to know each other", in Islam no male-female pre-marital relations of any kind are formally allowed and even common interactions are discouraged, as a successful marriage is not meant to depend on physical attraction. In the Qur'an it is stated that men and women are not allowed to be alone together, must "lower their gaze and guard modesty" when they do meet. Marriage partners are to be chosen with the help of family members, by using close networks with same-sex friends to identify possible candidates. The father or mother may approach that family to suggest a match. If everyone agrees, a chaperoned meeting is arranged. If the couple seems well-suited, a more extensive investigation is carried out, where the family members inquire with friends and neighbours or religious leaders about the potential spouse before a decision is made with the consent of the couple. In this system, the parents are the mediators and the person to-be-married must be 'guarded against temptation'. Social space, therefore, is limited to controlled encounters, or permitted with certain "protective" devices, e.g. veiling and modest dressing, averting the eyes, modest body posture and behaviour, which are necessary to preserve the modesty of the woman.

In spite of such rigid Discourse, courtship *does* exist among many young people in Sudan as I witnessed it. Strategies are quite diverse, and do not necessarily correspond with degree of religiosity. Most young women and men I interacted with expressed a desire for a love relation in the same way it is generally understood in the West, an idea of partnership, friendship and attraction. In spite of the formal restrictions described above, public behaviour seems to be more

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Picture 6.1 On a bench at the University

flexible about male-female interactions. Unmarried couples or friends sit next to each other on park benches, walk next to each other, sit together in cafés, drive together in private cars, not unlike Western-style dating.

The young women that I interviewed frequently used the word "boyfriend" to describe the person they were "seeing", although physical relations were reportedly not pursued. However, most young women would not tell their fathers about their relationships and all expressed that such meetings could only happen in public places, never at home. According to several students, public meetings with their "boyfriend" or "girlfriend" can only happen at the University. The University was particularly important in supporting these interactions since men and women share classrooms and on-campus interactions are generally considered legitimate since the students have to be there. Most students were "seeing" someone with whom they share a course of study. One student told me that boys try to sit next to girls in lecture halls in order to "accidentally" touch knees or elbows with them.

Finding off-campus ways to interact with *chiks* 'young people of the opposite sex' is more difficult and requires some maneuvering. I gave the example of Leila, who uses public transportation as a way to talk to men. This seems to be a common way of meeting someone outside friendship circles. Public *kalaam* "chatter" between the sexes is highly discouraged in popular discourse for this very reason. Recognizing that young people were "imitating" Western style dating, the '*ulama* authority in Sudan issued a declaration on Valentine's Day for

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young Muslims to spend their time preparing for marriage rather than "encouraging temptation by taking romantic strolls" (*Sudan Tribune* 2009). Nonetheless people continue to find ways to talk, as they have done for a long time (see Chapter 5 on letter exchanges), and to get to know each other, through occasional physical meetings. Especially now, through the mobile telephone, young people are able to initiate and maintain relationships in especially discreet ways, where one's autonomy to create personal connections is possible and even legitimated by most. Furthermore, the discreetness of the telephone and the use of texting may be furthering young people's individual sensitivity and engagement with emotional relations. I describe this below.

The mobile phone and the semi-private social space for love

Like other "personal" items inside the Harem, the mobile phone is a semi-private possession. Phones collect on tops of refrigerators, nightstands and dressers. Family members share plugs and chargers, and often, the phone. People often borrow a sibling's phone if they don't have credit. However, romantic phone calls, especially for young women, are often taken in private, on the back porch, or in quiet whispers in bed.

According to my interviews, it is the boy that initiates contact with a girl by asking for her number. This must be done subtly in public since "talking to strangers in public is deemed very bad, *sudfa* 'shocking'!", according to Imen, who met her boyfriend on a long-distance bus ride from El Obeid to Khartoum. Rashid, perhaps jokingly, said that he asks for a girl's number when the engine of the public bus roars and no one can hear him. Fellah, in contrast, proudly observed that she never takes boys' numbers in public, except on two occasions, suggesting that it is common enough since her behaviour differed from the norm. Phone relationships often begin with a tentative text message. Here, poetry is often sent to open a contact. It is an ambiguous way to signal friendly or romantic interest and, if mutual, a reply is sent soon thereafter. I described the use of poetry in the last chapter as a way to keep in touch, although it has a narrower function as well, in expressing romantic interest. Like the sending of letters before the phone, the exchange of poetry in courtship has been common at least for several decades. Sawsen, Leila's mother told me the story of her courtship with Ibrahim in the 1970s. Every two months or so, over the course of ten years until the age of 23, Sawsen received a love poem or the lyrics of popular songs in the form of a handwritten letter. In order to keep the exchange discreet, an intermediary, *at-tarig as-sadig* 'the way of the friend', was used. At secondary school, for example, it was her teacher that ultimately handed her the notes after having received it from another collaborator. I heard similar stories from many people about earlier strategies for making contact with the opposite sex. Leila

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knew a girl in high school who received messages buried in a hole in the ground between her and a neighbour's yard. Another friend received a book through an intermediary with love letters folded in its pages every few days. Later, before mobiles, but when landlines were used, a boy would call a girl and hang up if someone else answered. Or, he might ask his sister to make the call who would then pass him the phone when the girl got on the line. The girl, if overheard by other family members, would cover up the identity of the caller by using a girl's name, "Oh hi Houda". In these interactions, we see that a host of collaborators are involved in order to assist the young couple's desire to interact, the *murassla* 'messenger' among others, making the contact indirect and semi-private in the end.

Picture 6.2 Semi-private items: Mobile phones and prayer rugs

Now, of course, exchanges don't require such strategizing and perhaps differently from before, it seems that women are taking the initiative in some ways. Once the phone interaction starts, according to several young men, girls often become the aggressive party, sending several poetry messages a day, calling frequently. I often heard exasperation from boys about being constantly "pursued" by women over the telephone. They felt an obligation, however, to take the call or return the message; ignoring her would be very "bad mannered". Women often told me that boys never let them pay for a call, by hanging up and calling

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back. Often, the women just make a *miskuul* 'missed call' and expect the call to be returned. Or, reportedly, they request the boy to send her credit if she has none. On the one hand, women are thought to be taken care of by men, while on the other hand, by taking advantage of male courtesy, such behaviours are generally seen as bad, and, as I will discuss shortly, indicative of a larger malaise in society, where women are portrayed as either naïve and "in danger" on the one hand or "immoral", "prostitutes" on the other, these Discourses coming from the perceived threat of liberal Western culture on "susceptible" women.

While these young men and women admit having "boyfriends" or "girlfriends" they assert that no physical contact occurs until marriage. In my understanding, what is important for both men and women is to get to know each other through talk, and the phone is seen as crucial in this process as it allows for extended male-female interactions beyond what is publicly acceptable. Leila emphasized the importance of initial phone conversations as a way for a woman to screen a suitor, and a respectful way for a suitor to show interest in a girl before asking to see her in person. Imen and her boyfriend Sumaa, after their shared bus ride, met soon thereafter, the first three months of their relationship consisted of many phone conversations and texting poetry. Sumaa has four phone numbers. Each of his phone numbers has an intimate nickname in Imen's contact list: '*amri* 'my life', *Habiibi* 'my love' etc. She and many others give private nicknames to their close connections showing how the phone is used in personal ways. Imen's sister's son is given the name 'My son' in English, a way of showing family closeness.

As I discussed in the Introduction, mobile phones are particularly important among young people for their discreet and affective functions. SMSs are a way to interact to express emotions without the embarrassing confrontation of face-to-face interactions. Barendregt (2006), summarizing the work of Ling (2005), says that texting, "create(s) an alternative social space in which (sometimes radically) different sexuality and romance norms and practices can be tried out", and Pertierra (2005), "(…) you can text things you cannot easily say: it is more anonymous and there is a disjunction between the meaning and the intention of what is being conveyed". Strong feelings may be expressed through the phone, such as the example of Randa and Bahar, above. And from what I understood these kinds of messages were generally erased shortly after.

Text-message poetry, described in the last chapter, seems to fulfill a more strategic function. Even though its sender is obvious, its "author" (see discussion on Goffman in Chapter 5) is not, nor is its romantic intent, as many seemingly romantic poems are sent for unromantic reasons. Some female students claim that poetry is a big part of their love relationships, that its meaning is deciphered based on the relation of the sender; others say it is not a mandatory part of a

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relationship. Part of the seduction, certainly, is determining how authentic the feelings in the poem may be. Also, poems, as I described in the last chapter, are not necessarily private, but draw from other poems or are reused, therefore removing the intensively personal nature of the message.

Following, are several examples of messages that were admittedly romantic even though in content, some of them resemble the non-romantic messages in Chapter 5 (see examples 6.1-6.4):

(6.1) صباح الخير .... يا أحلى وردة الزول يصبح بيها على نفسو ...بحبك أكثر من أي شي فى العالم
SebaaH al-khair…ya aHla warda al-zool yaSabaH biiha 'ala nafsu…baHibbik aktar min ayyi shi fi al-'alaam
'Good morning, the nicest flower that anyone would like to wake up to…. I love you more than anything in the world'

(6.2) حسونى ... مشتاقة ليك شديد حموت لو ماشفتك
Hasuuni mushtaaga leek shadiid Hamut low ma shuftak
'Hassuuni, I miss you too much, I will die if I don't see you'

(6.3) يأتي المساء وتسكن الانفس ولكن تبقي القلوب خافقه ترسل دعواتها لمن تحب
yaa'ti al misa' wa teskun al anfus wa laakin tabqa al quluub khaafiqatarsil da 'awaatha liman tuHib
'The evening approaches and the spirits calm but the still beating hearts send their prayers to those they love'

(6.4) يا حبى ما خلصتو
ya Hobbi ma khalaStu
'My love you didn't finish yet?'

As we can see, personal nicknames are common, *hasuuni* for Hassan, normally a diminutive version of a person's name. Some messages, such as the following, while not sent from Samia's love interest, play with sexuality and feelings:

(6.5) بطاقه احساسى ليك :-

1-الاسم مجنونك
2- اللقب
3- العمر ضايع بدونك
4- المهنه حامل شجونك

biTaaqat iHsaasi leek:	My passion card to you:
1) al ism majnuunak	Name, crazy for you
2) al laqab	Middle name, (illegible portion)
3) al 'amr Daayi' biduunak	Age, wasted without you
4) al mihna Haamil shujuunak	Profession, bearer of your feelings

This is a small sample, but love and emotions constitute the most common themes in text-messaging, whether or not its intent is truly romantic, as we saw in the last chapter.

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In Europe and the US in the 18th and 19th centuries, the increase in literacy and interpersonal letter-writing has been connected with the increase of romantic sensibility and individual desires (Breckenridge 2000). Could such a change be occurring in Sudan, where young people increasingly crave the intensity of romantic love, and can easily experiment with it through discreet texting and poetry writing? Is the text message allowing for the cultivation of affection that restrained physical contact does not permit? This was certainly the case in my junior high, where, due to excessive shyness, many early "relationships" took root in a daring note passed across the room. Also, as an adolescent in the US where parental restrictions prevented us from going out very late, the phone was a crucial tool for keeping in touch with peers. In Sudan, however, where pre-marital physical contact is discouraged, and unmarried young people remain in their parents' homes, this kind of "innocent" courtship may have a longer life. One friend at the University and his girlfriend used to send each other text messages using certain symbols that only the two of them knew about, e.g. < ~ > meant 'kiss'.

The phone is therefore a site for frank, intimate expression, privacy, a space for playing with romantic ideas and possibly the development of individual desires. In addition, it permits the high intensity, high frequency of interaction that is possible between young couples. Samia and her boyfriend, Khaled, have *fatur* 'breakfast' together on occasion at the University, but most of their interactions are through the internet or through text-messages, up to ten a day between them. Hatim and the girl he is seeing interact frequently, he says, with a couple phone calls and several text messages daily.

In spite of this high intensity, the phone's use is carefully managed. One student, Hashim, has phone relations with several girls, mostly through text-messaging. In his phone, I found only messages between himself and his male friends though, since he deletes all messages to girls for fear that someone would read them. It is generally considered acceptable by the mother to have a relation with a boy or girl as long as the "talk is safe". Some of the girls expressed that they have nothing to hide from their mothers and siblings, that any message could be shared, thus, a semi-private interaction. Most of the students said that their parents trust them, and don't ask for explanations of who has called. However, many young people are seen as exploiting these moderate freedoms and engaging in "immoral chat" with any number of people. Both boys and girls are vying for ways to defy formal boundaries, but the women are the focus of criticism, while the boys expressed that they were left alone. It's the woman's *choice* to make herself accessible or not. Therefore, girls also see the phone as the way to protect themselves. Hind doesn't accept poetry from boys she doesn't know well, by not replying. She might turn off the phone if she does not want to

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be contacted. Leila is both outgoing and social, but is also quite guarded. She doesn't save anyone's phone number in her phone until that person has proven himself trustworthy and consistent. Fellah doesn't give her phone number to very many people, although she does use her phone to maintain a long relationship with one guy with whom she never meets in person.

As I described earlier, women, while formally relegated to "private" space, have a number of strategies for breaching their compounds, physical and social. One of the most important ways is attending university and later working outside the home. Leila uses these two occupations to create a mixed gender network of friends and she uses the social occasions afforded by these as ways to interact with men in particular including, even, the transportation she takes to move around town. These examples show that young people negotiate the limits of their physical movements in order to broaden their social opportunity, weakening the public/private dichotomy. In addition, with the introduction of communication technologies namely the phone (but also letters, internet), the idea that public/private physical space is analogous to social space does not, in fact, hold up, except in moral Discourse. With the mobile phone this distinction breaks down as a young woman can quite easily have a long conversation with her boyfriend inside the *bayt al-niswaan*, while lying on her bed unveiled in a *jellabiya*. The semi-private space of the Harem is punctuated with the voices of male friends and lovers. As such, this space is no longer strictly inhabited by women, making the public a part of private, a kind of intermediate realm where the normal protective devices are not applied. As Brinkman *et al.* (2009) observed, mobile phone contact is bypassing the traditional chain of authority on male-female interactions by allowing immediate and direct contact between young people. At the intersection of front/back or public/private, protective barriers should be present: a wall, a veil, a female escort or even a demure gaze downward, but even with such physical obstructions, women are increasing their autonomy through distant wireless socializing. The mobile phone bypasses the exterior walls of the compound, breaches the male guardians in the "front", and for some, even the authority of the mother over the semi-private Harem, making a direct line to a young unmarried woman. In spite of the complications of arranging regular physical meetings, restrained in public and impossible in private, neither condoned by parents nor the general public outside the university, Leila and the other students manage to maintain intensive relationships via the intimacy and discretion afforded with the mobile phone.

The courting strategies described here involve a degree of privacy that was not as easy to obtain before the telephone. In this enlarged private space, young people talk at length and get to know each other beyond the gaze of the public eye. Also, highly affective and intimate language is expressed, especially in text-

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ing. Such interactions stand in opposition to the conservative Islamic Discourse on proper pre-marital behaviour between the genders. Such a Discourse is promoted by the Government and inspired by the new fundamentalist brand of Islam that is more widespread now in Sudan. As we saw, letters between lovers were exchanged in the past, when religious moral pressure was not as intense as it is currently. However, social pressures then were certainly restrictive on physical movements as women didn't work as much and "traditional" roles had more of a natural place, as did the Harem. Now, however, when squeezed between the need to be out in the world, to earn money, and the new Islamic veneer on public space, young women are experiencing a moral tug-of-war under male-dominated social pressure. The question we might ask is how is all this viewed by larger society? And, what kind of agency is possible here? In the next section, drawing from several interviews, I will discuss the common public Discourse on young women and the introduction of mobile phones in order to situate the following discussion on how women are able to reconcile newer social space for male – female interaction within respectable limits.

Romantic curiosities and moral crises

I have shown how the phone is used carefully to create new contacts, extend social relations and broaden one's social space. A specific use of the mobile is its role in facilitating sustained male-female relationships through talk, a relatively new type of extra-marital relationship in Sudan, largely thought to originate from ideas taken from Western TV shows. However, we might wonder at the newness of love-driven relations since, as I described earlier, love letters were exchanged in the past before television came to Sudan. It may not be that TV is introducing such ideas, but TV, nonetheless, is being *blamed* for legitimizing such partnerships. This cultural influence has also created a desire for heterosexual friendships, in spite of the fear that contact with all marriage-able persons of the opposite sex may lead to temptation. In addition, due partly to the increasing globalization of media and education, many young women now share Western ideas of individual success, having a career, and finding a husband based on love. And although such relationships are acceptable among most of the young people that I interviewed, not necessarily in contradiction to being a "good Muslim", popular Discourse does not see such interactions as being appropriate, and this is often enacted on women via fathers or brothers, the designated guardians and protectors.

Young women are not contesting norms outwardly, they're not de-veiling, nor shortening their skirts, which would be overt acts of non-conformity, but they are giving their numbers away to boys they don't know, having long late-night conversations, declaring their love and affection, and ultimately looking (or even

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hunting) for their own marriage companions. Castells *et al*. (2007: 143) discuss the balance of autonomy vis-à-vis security with respect to parental control over young people and the mobile phone. The phone is a tool for the protection of children and emotional support on the one hand, but it is also a tool for "networked sociability", the development of individual networks based on "choice and affinity", which is guided by a desire for autonomy. Such autonomous decision-making is problematic in that it derails the male authority and the role of family in selecting "appropriate" spouses for their children. In Sudan, this is certainly the case, where generational upheaval has intensified concerns, many of which are focused on young women. Public discourse seems to cast two somewhat complementary images of women and the mobile phone, both of which justify the need for more control over her interactions, i.e. the phone puts women in danger, she is in need of protection and/or the phone permits women to behave badly.

A shopkeeper and his employee who mostly cater to university students explain:[4]

> "Some parents offer a mobile as a present to their daughters, just to check on her, to control her. They will call her asking where she is etc. (but …)
>
> Suppose a female student speaks with a man and they promise each other to meet outside, somewhere outside the university. But it is just a deception. Maybe the man is a criminal. So the girl goes, but he just tries to steal her mobile phone and her gold. Just deception."

Women are portrayed as naïve and gullible victims of criminal men, that women in such situations would not know how to keep *sharaf-ha* 'her honor'. On the other hand, women are cast as being immoral by permitting themselves to be accessible through the phone, which can easily lead to physical contact. In Hiba's words, "the mobile phone allows for men and women to set up spontaneous meetings. It's easy as "'Hello, where are you', 'I'm at – ', 'Let's – then they meet and do all that they want".[5]

Hiba, who runs a small credit-transfer service, received a late-night phone call from a woman accusing her of sending illicit SMSs to the woman's husband's phone. This episode was distressing to Hiba not only because the woman called her "shameful" words, but because she understood that the husband had hurt his wife by using the phone for illegal relations. She says receiving calls from strange men is very common. Some people divert their own calls to a random number. She also gets random phone calls from men in Saudi Arabia, saying they're depressed and want someone to speak with.

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4 Interview 7/7/2007 conducted by de Bruijn, Brinkman and Bilal.

5 Interview 9/8/2007 *Ibid.*

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Responding to a suggestion that the phone might help lovers to communicate, Hiba's response was the following, echoing what many others told me:

> "Lovers?! What do you mean by lovers? If you mean current immoral relations between men and women I don't agree with you, but also there are real lovers who use it to express their emotions in an ethical way, this is not a problem, but there is another kind of person who uses the mobile phone is such a bad way, they spend their time chatting (…) I used to live in the student's residence and know that, they spend their nights chatting, wasting their time. God wills against speaking, burdening finance and health while there are many tasks waiting."[6]

In a society where sexual expression is vigorously censored, the mobile phone has become an outlet for frustration, in turn, negatively reflecting on the phone itself as the cause, rather than the underlying social issue itself. A friend of Leila's in secondary school was prevented access to her phone at night; her father locked it in a cabinet with a key.

The mobile phone service providers are often blamed as well for offering free talk time promotions late after midnight.

> "[The phone] provides privacy for girls to communicate with their loved one and keep the secrets from their families, this is a disadvantage because we gradually start to accept this type of secret behaviour of daughters (…) a dangerous way in growing children."[7]

Dishonesty is a concern that emerged through several interviews, that the phone "teaches you to lie and cheat" was repeated frequently, "You can say you're in Medani, when actually you're in Khartoum". Internet chatting, like calling anonymous people, has created concerns for proper Muslim interaction as well. People who enjoy meeting online and talking are also concerned about it being proper since one's capacity for being dishonest on the internet is increased (Islam-qa 2005).

Another "immoral" use of the phone that emerges is the exchange of pornography. Those with Bluetooth technology can easily transfer sex videos from phone to phone.[8] This kind of media, in Sudanese slang referred to as *kamu-uniyya* 'sheep's intestines' is increasingly popular even among young women, and can even be purchased in a small store in Souk 'Arabi downtown. In September 2006, the Sudanese Government confiscated all laptops coming into the country in order to scan them for pornography (Computer World Online 2006) which is illegal under *shari'a* law. Most of the students I met with did not have newer phone models and therefore were not using video, internet or Bluetooth options. However, that pornography is circulating adds to many questions about women and sexuality. Although I did not research this, many of my own friends

6 Interview 9/8/2007 *Ibid.*

7 Interview 9/8/2007 *Ibid.*

8 Interview 7/8/2007 *Ibid.*

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in an older age group said that sexual relations are, in fact, common even among university students, in spite of these students' assertion that no physical contact is pursued. It is an open question, therefore, and one difficult to get at, given the stringent Islamic moral code on pre-marital relations of any kind, sexual ones of course completely prohibited, and punishable by flogging. Whether or not sexual behaviour is occurring, however, talk about it *is* and young women are perceived of as being under threat by reckless sexual temptation, seen to compromise a most fundamental aspect of Islamic society.

Public Islamic Discourse is, in a way, replacing the already existing conservatism of gender interaction in Sudan. Differently from the past, however, is the degree of blame placed on women in particular (Bernal 1997; Nageeb 2004; Willemse 2007), and the increased pressure resulting from their earlier "emancipation", where a highly individual moral imperative is the controlling feature, rather than a more natural social immobility based on the physical immobility of earlier separated lifestyles and divided labour roles. In the new electronic era, where women study, work, leave the house and take public transport alone, traditional social structures cannot "protect" or "prevent" them from harm or temptation respectively. It is up to the woman to prevent such events through personal safeguards. How, if no longer entrusted to the protection of the Harem, does a woman manage to empower herself, to create social space while maintaining respectability? As women's space and domestic roles are now devalued, and "traditional" practices are cast as un-Islamic sources of female solidarity, women certainly need to empower themselves through other more individual means. The mobile phone is instrumental here since it allows for social extension without breaching behavioural norms in public space. In addition, as I will discuss in the last section, male-female talk and texting is being negotiated within the range of allowances of a new choice-making woman.

The space in-between: Being a "good Muslim" and a desiring individual

In the face of such public scrutiny and moral critique, as Nageeb (2004) has observed for women's dress in particular, women adopt a number of strategies, some which conform with the prescribed Islamic code of behaviour, others which undermine it, all strategies being agentive in the sense that they are individual choices that women make in order to function with their means within the system, the "fictive invisibility" (Khatib-Chaibi 1993) or the "protective" devices which formally block brazen male-female interaction, but in many cases, actually permit it.

The phone is a protective device for some, like a veil. Its use may adhere to the Islamist moral code, as a way to screen callers, turned off to avoid unknown

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callers, protecting women from face-to-face encounters. At the same time it can be empowering. Rather than being peeped at by potential suitors, women can opt to be unavailable, to *not* reply to a message is holding power. Another outcome to increased pressure is the use of the phone for manipulating social mobility and secrecy, such as those behaviours that are causing moral panic. Here, the phone's use completely defies prescribed behaviour by allowing men to trespass into the women's Harem by calling for "immoral chat" or by women's own assertive behaviour, calling or texting men. Women are supposed to remain in private space, outside the gaze of men, but this circumnavigation lets them enter into agency, selectively calling or receiving calls, writing their own networks, friendships, communities through choice, and disrupting the standard codes for male-female interaction. It allows them freedom of movement, freedom of contact, to make their own decisions about who to talk to, increased autonomy.

However, from the interpretations of some of my female informants, getting to know men and finding love are not considered *Haraam* 'forbidden' as long as "talk is safe". Here, a third option is available. To this generation of Sudanese, a clear distinction was made between "immoral chat" with any man and "serious chat" with a lover, which was deemed permissible. However, knowing the difference between the two could only come from within. Surprisingly, this view makes having a choice as being compatible with behaving according to an Islamic moral code. Many young women proudly relayed to me that Islam honored them with many rights: "She must be cared for", "pleasured in bed", "allowed time to get to know her husband before intercourse", "cuddled with" etc. The right to choose one's lover is supported by Qur'anic rhetoric on women's right to be "cared for", "treated equally", "be happy", in short, the right to love and be loved. In contrast, practices such as not educating women, not allowing her to see her future husband at least once, not securing her consent to marry etc. are preached against in the new Islam, seen as "traditional" and barbaric. This new youth culture's open position on choice and compatibility in relationships is not contrary in their view to being a "good Muslim" as long as it is genuine. It is not my purpose to delve into the complexities of Islamic Feminism, and the untangling of patriarchal, "traditional", vs. religious authority, nor is my data adequately sufficient for such a discussion. Suffice it to say, these women don't express moral anxiety about their desire to find, choose and know a man before marrying him. In justifying this, they related to me various Qur'anic provisions on women, suggesting that they permit themselves a certain *tafsir* 'exegesis' of women's right to choice and love based on some other aspects of the Qur'an. While new fundamentalism supposedly exerts more control over women, paradoxically, as I stated earlier, such pressure is deemed to be very humane, it is to come from within.

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The mobile as well fits into this atmosphere of new agency and decision-making autonomy that comes with a more mobile lifestyle. The mobile phone, necessary for coordinating mobile lives, creates more margins for interaction and the simultaneous desire to be more private. Consequently, the public limitations of social and physical space of women in the context of "broadening imaginations and deterritorialization" (Nageeb 2004) squeeze women into a particular position of defense. Romantic love may not be a new idea, but it may be more of a possibility, a new idealized type of relation given the pressure to be a "good Muslim" to marry dutifully according to family wishes. There is, perhaps, increased maneuvering to avoid the fate of an arranged marriage. As the controlling public and parental influence are heightened, so too are the number of strategies for maneuvering augmented.

Bernal (1997) describes changes that took place in a rural Sudanese town in the 1980s where a conservative shift in Islamic thinking and related behaviours occurred with the return of male migrants from Saudi Arabia, bringing back with them new modern notions of "authentic" Islam. As women were increasingly outside the home for work, attempts at female seclusion, ironically increased. Houses which formerly had low mud walls were modified to have high brick or cement walls. Women, in the early 1980s, wore their *towb* both at home and out, but ten years later, entirely removed their *towbs* at home because of the stricter seclusion, showing how a greater divide between public and private makes the two worlds more opposed. Differently from the past, in the current era, rigid policies about women, in turn, create a situation where women, with higher educations and experience in the world, access to internet, TV and phones are able to be creative about finding ways to create social space in reaction to such pressure.

Thus, we see a growing tension between the public and the private, where increased pressure in public space results in increased room for movement in the private one, where the choice, autonomy and individual moral guidelines are constructed, rather than imposed. The mobile phone, used as a semi-private instrument, is appropriated into this intermediate space, re-drawing the boundaries between "public" and "private" such that it does not conform to the standard male-female restrictions on interaction. However, the entrance of men into private space is more like an entrance into the semi-private Harem, her own moral boundary, rather than her solely individual private space. Mothers, friends and relatives or neighbours were all collaborators in this endeavor in the past. While this is not needed now, the openness of girls to share the details of their relationships with their mothers and even me, and their lack of shame in this suggests that the Harem is a space from which young women continue to draw power, a legitimate middle space and level of collaboration that subverts the role of the

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"guardians". In presenting the results of this study, many people asked me how it was that I obtained such "private" and personal information from these young people. This was, for other researchers of mobile telephony, a methodological problem. My answer is that transparency in one's communication is important in Sudan – that showing me their text-messages wasn't extraordinary for them as this fits with the culture of semi-privacy. The content of text message poetry is not necessarily completely private, nor is it unambiguously romantic, as we saw in the last chapter on poetry. Therefore, women can maintain a semi-private space, which can be understood as a strategy for maintaining respectability. This space is sanctioned by the support group of collaborators, who are either allowed to look at the texts, participate in writing them, assist by sending them through their phones when credit is low, provide emotional support in discussing them, or, as in my case, use them to investigate the social-cultural world of young Sudanese people.

Leila sets an example

The increased individuality and autonomy associated with private or semi-private interactions may be leading to an augmented romantic sensibility. This leads to a confrontation between individual desires cultivated through text messages or calls, with the collective desires for a young woman's marital options, based on the social and economic needs of the family. Fears about this come from images of women as victims with no moral boundaries. Yet, while individuality and autonomy are enhanced, the courtship strategies exercised through the phone are carefully managed within respectable limits, occupying the semi-private space where the trust of mothers and friends is maintained. This semi-private boundary paradoxically broadens the content and purpose of private interactions, increasing the possibilities of private space, while involving a team of collaborators, both expanding the private and legitimating it through the involvement of others, thereby not intrinsically private. With a religious sensibility on the outside and the support of the semi-private Harem in legitimating a personal moral code, women may be entrusted with greater social movement. Whether the mobile phone is creating new notions of interpersonal connection is not certain. But that it is embraced by some to extend their social interactions and perceived by most to do so is clear. This is expressed in the public concerns about women and mobile phones, as well the perceived importance of the phone in courtship. For some this is problematic socially, for others, it is a convenient tool to strategize for choice and control over a possible marriage partner.

Leila sets an example where a new Islamic morality parallels an increased desire for movement and choice in life, and of successful maneuvering between the two. She is a strikingly independent and mobile young woman. In spite of her

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being *muHaajiba*, and her adoption of the moral Discourse, her lifestyle and social interactions are quite liberal, revealing what may seem like a contradictory Islamic identity. One might superficially guess that Leila overtly conforms to and but secretly rebells against Islamist discourse, portraying her as a suppressed victim. However, a more nuanced view is that she is operating within prescribed behaviour, by partaking in the newer more "authentic" Islam, taking advantage of its negotiable aspects.

She is a child of the Islamist movement in many overt ways: she participates in the Government's workforce, as a flight attendant for Sudan Airways, a very feminine profession. As a flight attendant, she works a role traditionally associated with women, a care-giver, hostessing role, which can be seen as an extension of mothering (Willemse 2007). She has, in part, the "fictive invisibility" of a *muHaajiba*. Her family are "religious" in that they are observant, are "Arab" in that they belong to the *ja'ali* tribe and "true" Muslims in that they don't tolerate the "backwardness" of Sufism, rather following a newer fundamentalist type of Islam from their experience living in Saudi Arabia.

On the other hand she is pursuing a Master's at the Faculty of Agriculture, a male-dominated institution. Since Sudan's economy is based in agriculture, policy decisions and development planning are controlled by powerful agriculturalists. Women do not traditionally partake at this elite level, yet she aims to. She also has defied "tradition" by not marrying yet, rejecting several "appropriate" suitors, and waiting for a love relation. Like many young women of her generation she is conforming to the rules while reinterpreting them. By partaking in the new Islamic religiosity, she's able to buy herself freedoms that women may not have had in the past and using opportunities that come with increased mobility to further herself socially. She readily admits that some of her best friends are males and while these relations concern her mother, her mother has profound confidence in her. Leila is the bread-winner of the house, will soon hold a Master's degree, the highest education in her family, is responsible, prays regularly, and presents herself in a conservative way. And while she positions herself to meet new potential suitors, she has earned the respect of her parents to make good judgments and behave morally, aspects of a modern, educated notion of an Islamic woman, one allowed to cultivate individual desires.

Therefore, even though women and homogenizing in order to build an *umma* are the focus of Islamic reform, there is, at the same time, more autonomy for women in decision-making. Heightened Islamic codes of women's behaviour are not necessarily in opposition to this newer freedom, which is re-interpreted as Islamic, in contrast to un-Islamic "traditions" and uneducated women. As Bernal (1997: 147) observes, "The rise of Islamic fundamentalism can be seen as part of the decline of the local community as the center of moral and social power (…)

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whereby the role of the individual in making cultural choices is heightened and made visible". This brand of Islam allows for an individually crafted Islamic identity, it is "discipline, a self-mastery, a choice, not just a fact". Islamic Discourse on women therefore is paradoxically open for negotiation, where increasing control over women in the public space somehow co-exists with increased autonomy associated with a new religiosity. Just as women manipulate dressing styles, mobile women such as Leila carefully and discreetly control their relationships through their mobile phones, negotiating more room for movement by employing "protective" devices to ensure their respectability and employing aspects of Islamic Discourse that support the notions of choice, autonomy and self-guided morality for women, a modern, sophisticated way of existing within the Islamic framework.

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7

Being "modern": From Shakespeare to chat room literacy

(7) Hi girl, how r u? Its better 4 u to start studing coze time is over. Goodluck! (happy dreams & good night;-) where r u now? Sinnar or…

'Hi girl, how are you? It's better for you to start studying because time is over. Goodluck! (happy dreams & good night ;-) where are you now? Sennar or…'

Fellah's story

This text message was sent from Fellah El Sharif, an 18 year-old student of English and linguistics at the University of Khartoum to Hana, a classmate of hers. If I didn't know its origin, however, I would have guessed its author to be a teenager from Southern California rather than Sudan. Fellah's mastery of American youth slang with the phrase, 'hi girl' and the letter and number homonyms *r* 'are', *u* 'you' and *4* 'for', is remarkable. That she not only writes in almost fluent English but adopts a specific type of youth dialect begs the questions, where did she learn it, and why is she talking like that?

Fellah is half Egyptian and half Sudanese, but was born in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) because her father, a technician in a dental technology lab, had moved the family there for work. She lived there until the age of twelve, after which she moved to Sudan. She now lives in Omdurman with her family. Her English is good, she says, because she studied for three years in the British system in the UAE. She also speaks French, and has plans of going to France after graduation, even though she feels most comfortable with English. Fellah has had a phone for three years, but in her opinion phone communication is not as good as face-to-face interaction. She feels that it's easier for people to lie; they can pretend to be somewhere they are not. She says this is a big problem in Sudan. It also creates the occasion for people to discuss immoral topics, "such as bikinis". Even the phone companies are promoting this as Areeba (MTN) lets you talk for free at night. She also thinks the internet is creating opportunities for

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immoral behaviour, where "girls can act as boys, or boys can act as girls". Nonetheless, she uses the internet and her phone to communicate with her friends, but in conscientious ways. On two occasions, she remembers giving her number to boys she doesn't know first.

As for boys in general, she doesn't think about them. She prefers to follow custom by doing as her parents would expect. If a boy is interested in talking to her, he will approach her parents first, and if they agree, then she and the boy can sit in the living room and talk. Only then can he ask for her phone number if she so decides. In the future, she might consider marrying a non-Sudanese, if he were a Muslim. She distrusts Sudanese men, and fears for lying, turning off the phone, or coming home late. She also said that Sudanese men treat women poorly, as they would "an animal or an insect".

Fellah was one of the best students in the second-year linguistics course I taught. She made herself known to me early on because of her ability to speak English in contrast to the majority of the students in the class who struggled with the material due to poor English skills. In fact, as is normal in a large lecture course, the instructor gets to know only the most assertive students, and in this case, it was those who had better English who came forward. Naturally it was also this same handful of students who were willing to come for interviews about their text messages as they were less shy. During the interviews, however, I discovered that most of these more confident students had lived abroad, in one of the Gulf countries, for much or most of their lives. It was their early experience with English education in the Gulf that later enabled them to perform better at the University. It also enabled their interest and access to the internet, and to be able to interact with me. Most people who have lived in the Gulf, Fellah says, have better English skills, because much of the education is in English. People also have access to the internet more easily, and start using *logha chat* 'Chat language'. She says that Chat language is seen as prestigious in Sudan, since few people know how to use it. According to Fellah, "Sudanese people are too lazy to learn new things, like Chat language". Fellah as well as Samia, Hatim, Lu'lu', Nada and a few others would often come after class and ask questions, and walk me back to my office. Fellah would ask me what I thought of Sudanese people, of their culture, of their hospitality, or the difficulties I had in Sudan. I later understood, when I had the chance to interview her, why she was so interested in my opinions about Sudanese people. It was because she was looking to me for confirmation of her own feelings as an "outsider" among Sudanese people.

This chapter concerns the phone as a technology, an instrument of modern life, which naturally imports a whole culture of modern language and behaviours. Using it involves electronic literacy, which is indexical with other notions of modernity including certain vocabulary and scripts from English media often

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carried to Sudan via one of the Gulf countries, from where much of the Arab world's globalized media originate. I will first discuss the use and status of the mobile phone and then English, both as "technologies of communication". They both function as tools with which Sudanese students can access international channels of information, and distinguish themselves from the mainstream. Then, I will discuss how the students with access to English language and scripts, use this capability in text-messages to display their identity as "modern" people. By using English in their discourse, in particular a mixed code of English and Arabic "Chat language", these students construct their in-groupness by continuing texting styles they learned while living in the Gulf, aspects of personal style, which they associate with a higher quality of life. Some of these students, like Fellah, also profess a better understanding of Islam than their Sudanese peers, criticize Sudanese culture as backward, and simplistic, and in turn feel rejection and estrangement from other young people. Differing literacies in these technologies creates gaps, where some benefit from this technology, others are excluded, as was the case with the students in my linguistics course. Electronic literacies, therefore, create a privileged virtual space for interaction and the display of identity, which is simultaneously based in Sudan, and outside of it. The mobile phone facilitates a particular transnational niche, an interactive community, which links aspects of a Sudanese experience with the globalization of English and the Arabian peninsula, perhaps the most important reference point for a "modern" lifestyle for many young Sudanese people. In spite of a disagreement among scholars as to the globalizing effects of the mobile phone, I suggest that indeed, it is a means for new connectivity, a new kind of community, expressed in language, but which takes its meaning from a shared identity of English-speaking, internationally connected and "modern" Sudanese type of young person.

The mobile phone is a technology and a symbol of modernity

The mobile phone is an instrument of modern life. This is no less true in Sudan as anywhere else, where it connotes lifestyle changes such as "speed and immediacy" (Brinkman *et al.* 2009), and, moreover, connectivity to global networks and information flows (Castells *et al.* 2007). It has been claimed that globalized media is the channel through which the "rhetoric of the market" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1999) reaches into the homes of Africans. Radios, TVs and cellular phones digitally transport these media messages across great distances, connecting people through electronic circuits or airwaves but also through the common experience of being a media consumer, uniting the ways that people, "increasingly share aspirations (and) material standards" (Knauft 2002).

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Picture 7.1 The modern Zain logo dominates downtown Khartoum

Because of its initial high cost in Sudan, access to mobile phones was reserved for the most affluent people in society. Mobiles were associated with the elite class, businessmen and wealthy families, and therefore its use was affiliated with a higher status, those who could benefit from the products that make life easier. As it became more affordable in Sudan, its consumers spread quickly to the student population. Young populations in developing countries are known to be among the first to adopt modern technologies since consumption and imitation of North Americans or European trends is a way of seeking status (Castells *et al*. 2007). Most university students in Khartoum are confronted with new social possibilities while still needing to keep in touch with their families and feel that the importance of owning a phone overrides its great expense. Many people bought their first mobile phone as they entered university.

The mobile phone is not only a product of modern life which creates new social possibilities, it is also a symbol of modern life – that is – the phone is used in ways that increase connectivity, and change the shape of communities, enhance autonomy, but it is also employed symbolically to display that connectivity. Indeed, the phone is a modern technology, and it allows people to access more information. Its portable and wireless functions are mysterious and magical. Using it involves money; it is a commodity that is owned and consumed but having one also means "being modern". However, following Spitulnik's (2002a) inquiry, what does it mean to "be modern"? "Modernity" she says, involves "culturally specific ways of understanding and enacting what it means to 'be

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modern'" which is associated with "having a better life" or being "up-to-date". "Modernity" is enacted in ways that have relevance to the people using them; it has "local" meaning. The culture it creates emerges from local values and conceptions of what it means to be modern, not all of which are derived directly from Western concepts of modernity. The way people engage with technology indicates its social significance. Therefore, the phone brings with it not only a bundle of imported ideas but creates the social space for the emergence of a local "mobile phone culture" (Brinkman *et al.* 2009), including the way it is worn, or kept in the house, how it is referred to, how it is displayed, where it is used and by whom, not only as a communication technology, but as an emblem of modern life.

In practice, however, how does the researcher avoid making translation errors in order to get at emic conceptions of "modernity" (Spitulnik 2002a)? Since so many of the words denoting modern things come from English, the colonial language, how can we uncover "local" categories? And, data from "indigenous" languages is difficult because you can't simply read from "native terms to consciousness". One has to understand the semantic field and contextualized uses of "modern" behaviours. In the present research, I consider the data in this light, although certainly my work is not free of error or misrepresentation. More extensive fieldwork would be necessary to dig deeper into Sudanese concepts of modernity. Nonetheless, I present the data, as best I can, in the words of those who provided me with it.

A number of local Sudanese expressions have emerged with the introduction of the mobile which either reference or perform its modern connotation. For example, phone models as they emerge on the market are frequently given nicknames. Many Nokias are simply named after their numeric model number, such as *elf-u-miya* 'one-thousand one hundred' for the Nokia 1100, *sittateen zifreen* 'two sixes, two zeros' for the 6600 or *thalateen u 'ashira* 'two threes and a ten' for 3310. The 3310 model later was turned into a pun called the *hasharteen hashara* 'two insects, one insect' (Brinkman *et al*. 2009). The formulations are trendy as they are rhymed if possible rather than read off as numbers. The use of numbers refers directly to their status as technological items. However, not all of these nicknames derive from Western words or even notions of modern culture, such as e.g. "handy" the nickname for mobile in German, but are arguably based in local conceptions or even humorous approaches to newness or technology. The nickname *tuba* 'mud brick' is used for the Nokia 1100 because of its heaviness and bigness, *safaga* 'leaf' for another which is very flat, *saHab* 'friend' for a sliding phone and *sheytaan* 'Satan' is used for a widescreen phone for watching movies. The use of these metaphors for physical properties or functions is clearly a play on their newness; they are being interpreted in terms of known and

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understood objects or concepts. In the case of *sheytaan* 'Satan' it is a metaphor based on its *unknown* properties, since the phone has a screen, a recorder, and very high volume, its features making it unbelievable. Modern here is equated with *evil* due to its magical properties. The use of the word *sheytaan* in Sudan can be extended to anything extraordinary including a talented person, or a successful student, who can inspire jealousy. Other words indicating its mysterious nature include the colloquial words specific to Sudanese dialect, *kallaama* 'talker' and even more slang-like, *naDHaama* 'speaker', deriving from a rural dialect verb *naDHam* 'talk/speak'. The standard Arabic word *jawaal* 'mobile' and the English word *mobaayil* 'mobile' are used alongside these more colloquial terms but don't share their connotation as a personified object. Another set of names refers to current entertainment or political figures. The *'ashiiga* was named after a Lebanese pop song. One Nokia model was named the Salva Kiir, the President of Southern Sudan. The phone came out at the same time that Salva Kiir made an announcement about John Garang's death. Another, the Rebecca, was named after John Garang's wife, while the Janjaweed, named after one of the militant Arab groups in Darfur came out alongside the Darfur conflict. The use of familiar popular names is a kind of ironic and playful public culture and illustrates how people engage in local modernity, through shared names, places and current events which correspond with the appearance of phone models.

Certain vocabulary related to interacting via the mobile phone is associated with a young and urban identity. The use of the standard Arabic verb *ittaSil 'aleey* 'connect with me' is used frequently as is *aDrab leey* 'call me' (literally beat me), a colloquial expression. The English phrase, 'missed call' (7.1), has actually been assimilated into the verbal morphology of Sudanese Arabic, as in *miskaal leey* 'miss-call me', even taking the tense and person markers, *miskalti leey?* 'Did you call me?' I will return to the performative uses of English in-depth in a later section.

(7.1) اشواق انا منتظراكى تعملى لى مسكول ما شغاله ولا الحاصل شنو ؟
ashwaag, ana muntaziraki ta'amali leey **miskuul** ma shaghaala wala al HaSal shinu?
'Ashwag, I'm waiting for you, make me a missed call, aren't you working and what's up?

Other performative ways of being modern beyond linguistic ones include the choice of phone company. For example, many young people see Zain as the most contemporary service provider. According to my research assistant, it is the only company that businessmen, "ministers and diplomats in sensitive positions" use, as well as the most popular one among my university students. Its black and turquoise swirl logo can be seen everywhere in Khartoum, even as a popular

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Picture 7.2 A woman in a Zain gown on a street in Khartoum

design for women's *towbs*, the traditional Sudanese women's cloth wrapped around the body. The phone screen is also a site for performance as students put pictures such as the French football player Henri on display.

In the next section, I will discuss how language, in this case English, is also a technology of communication, as well as being a symbol of access to modernity, before returning to a discussion of the relation between the phone and the way language is used in it.

English is a technology and a symbol of modernity

Languages and literacies, as well, are communication technologies, as they facilitate the means for contact and access to information. Goody (1968) saw Arabic in West Africa as a "technology of literacy", and a symbol of modernity since the

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introduction of writing technology introduced through the spread of Islam, altered the way previously oral texts were transmitted and reproduced. Arabic then became a prestige medium for the production of religious and literary texts long before indigenous African languages were written down. In Sudan, Arabic literacy had existed for centuries, and its use was indeed reserved for the few elite religious scholars, many of whom had gone for training in Egypt or Saudi Arabia. A "restricted literacy" was maintained where only a small portion of the population could read and interpret until the post-independence period. The role of Arabic, therefore, was primarily religious although it was used in official correspondence and for keeping records of land tenure (Crummey 2005).

English, in contrast, has been an important language in the Sudan since the British occupation where it took on a role as the language of colonial administration. However its use stood for notions of progress, technology and modernization along European lines. The British were in the business of expanding their empire, and an important part of maintaining this was the role of communications and transportation technologies (Sharkey 2003a). They built or introduced roads, railways, automobiles, steamboats, telegraphs, telephones, and postal systems, which necessarily facilitated the rapid circulation of information and people. However, they needed support staff to run this vast operation, which required the training of loyal workers. According to Sharkey (2003a), it was along these transportation and communication technologies that, "conceptions of cultural space and social identity evolved" which later yielded to sentiments of shared space, common history and national identity. The staff employed to operate the colonialist operation were the first nationalists, those who embraced the vision of modernity presented to them by the British, which included the endorsement of "social progress based on science and reason and calling for developments in education, health and technology along Western lines" (*Ibid.*: 11).

Interestingly, the site of the current research, the University of Khartoum, is the same location of one of the most important British projects, Gordon College, the school built in 1902 specifically for the training of these young Sudanese men. The British hand-picked young men from among the elite families of Northern Sudan to attend Gordon College, who would later go on to be clerks, accountants, teachers, engineers, and judges in the regime. Summarizing Sharkey's account, the school was modeled on a British private school, with sports, games, classical and modern languages, literature; generally a holistic education, a campus lifestyle and culture. It was a socialization into the values, interests and visions of the British. English was the language of instruction, and speaking it, along with wearing European clothing were marks of a "modern" individual. It also opened the door to wider Anglophone culture, the other writers, such as Gandhi, in the British Empire. This training was seen by many Sudanese as

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advantageous over that of traditional Islamic education since it provided guaranteed status and employment and strong literary education in both English and Arabic. Exercises in free-thinking, and argumentation, language skills along with printing and typing, also technologies of communication, enabled these Sudanese men to solidify their ideas in writing, and share them with one another, ultimately, forging a strong print culture, which gave way to the nationalist movement (*Ibid.*).

While the first nationalists read Shakespeare and played lawn tennis, and were modeling their vision of Sudan based on Western ideas of modernization, they nonetheless retained an Arab-Islamic cultural foundation, and used this to base their national identity on. At independence, however, Arab-Islamic sentiment became a political ideology, which was consolidated under Al Bashir in 1991, with the adoption of a penal code based on *shari'a* law. ISLAMIZATION policies were to "return" aspects of state and society to reflect the "authenticity" of Islam through *tas'iiel* "Islamization of knowledge". As it concerned the University, this meant a revamping of the educational system and the purging of academics (O'Fahey 1993). The 1992 General Education Act outlines how the education system was to be ARABIZED, that Islamic studies were to be taught at every level. English, formerly the principle language of post-primary education, was reduced in importance by successive policy changes. Many people at the University associate the periods of ISLAMIZATION with the downturn in the quality of education. Certainly the reasons are multiple and not simply tied to its language policy. However, these perceptions show that the University was no longer seen as means of access to a "modern" education, although students do recognize the political advantages of attending it. I heard the nostalgic statement, "The University of Khartoum used to be the best university in Africa", many times over from students and people outside the academic community. Even though the educational system offers English language, the quality of the education is wanting, as was evident in the poor English skills among my students, who were reputed to be the best students in Sudan. The University had fallen from its glory as an eminent institution.

But these changes at the national level, have not completely erased the legacy of the British nor the importance of English. There are a number of English language newspapers still in print: Citizens, the Khartoum Monitor and Sudan Vision, showing that it continues to be an important second language in Sudan. But if the use of English is not supported by the state, how does its importance continue, and what does being literate in English *do* for a person? Not unlike the early nationalists, who used English as a means to access ideas of nationhood and modernity coming from outside Sudan, young people now continue to see English as a resource, a means for getting ahead in the world. Most all of the students

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I interviewed, whether or not they speak it, told me that they considered English the most important language, even over Arabic. The reason they gave is that it is the "global" language, and a way to get a job. In the words of Hamdan, mastery of both "*fuSHa* and English gives you a status as dangerous person (in Sudan)". He said that most of what he likes to do on the internet is only in English. Some said they like watching films, that English films were better than those in Arabic. Hatim likes music that is sung in English. Others professed an emotional attachment to English, such as Lu'lu', who claims that it's more expressive to her than Arabic, that her personality is better represented. These students, like Fellah, use English in their text messages. Most of them also spent much of their childhood living in one of the Gulf countries and learned English either in school there, or through intensified contact with English media channels, TV or internet.

The Gulf is modern place

That English arrives in Sudan via the Gulf seems to contradict many assumptions about the Middle East, as the source for Islamic conservatism. At the same time, the Gulf states and Egypt are *the* main outside sources for Sudan's media. Satellites such as ArabSat or NileSat host a number of channels, in Arabic and English, and broadcast as many American and British TV shows, sitcoms, news and films as arrive in an average Western household. That ideas and things circulate from the Gulf to Sudan is not a new process. Beginning with the initial spread of Islam and continuing up to this day Mecca has been the main point of orientation for Muslims. Prayer faces Mecca, a Muslim should perform the *Hajj* by visiting Saudi Arabia, many scholars were trained in Islamic Science there, and brought back literacy as well as objects. However, this new kind of transnational culture features decidedly Western products, somehow juxtaposed with a kind of "Islamic modernity", where "Western and Islamic cultures (…) are closely intertwined (…) rather than appearing as irreconcilable opposites" (Bernal 1997).

Bernal has focused on how "modernity" has entered a small Sudanese village in the guise of new Islamic practices, dress, and ideas which come mainly from Saudi Arabia, and are imported via return migrants, contrasting with local versions of Islam which are then cast as "traditional". In the 1980s following the oil boom, Saudi Arabia hosted masses of labour migrants from the Sudan and elsewhere. Labour migrants return as members of a certain social category called *mukhteribiin* (*Ibid.*), regardless of the kind of work they did. They are granted a higher social status because of their stay abroad, and return with consumer goods, stories, "but also new ideas about being Sudanese, Arab or Muslim". Because of the importance of Saudi imported products, many of which originated in the West, divisions between East and West were blurred in villagers' minds. One

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example is the adoption of white wedding dresses in Arab countries; this style is mimicked in Sudan, not directly from the West, but via Arab TV programs coming from the Gulf. Furthermore, Western is not distinguishable from Islamic modernity since many of the tools of the Islamic fundamentalist movement are based in principles of Western education, media styles and the roles of women, which I addressed in Chapter 6. While Bernal is concerned specifically with *Islamic* modernity, many of her observations are applicable to the current research as it concerns media channels and return migrants.

In the current decade, many of the Arabic news channels are achieving greater success now that they are modeled on Western journalistic style, the well-known Al-Jazeera, broadcast out of Qatar, being a good example. Saudi Arabia, paradoxically, has prohibited satellites in the past, while being one of the major producers of Arab satellite programs broadcast out of Europe. Along with a small amount of religious content, these channels mostly buy TV shows from the West, censor and subtitle them, and broadcast them to Arabs and Muslims who do have satellites. Among Dubai's many initiatives are Internet City, presumably the IT hub of the Middle East, and Media City, which competes with Cairo for being the media center of the Arab world (*Wired Magazine Online* 2004), but unlike Cairo or Saudi Arabia, its broadcasting is uncensored which has attracted major networks CNN, Reuters and the giant Middle East Broadcasting Company (MBC). Dubai is considered by many in the Arab world an emblem of success, the place to make money, a place of opportunity, and class. In fact, most all imported electronics make their way to Sudan from Dubai through shipping channels across the Red Sea. One can often hear the claims, "I got it in Dubai" or "you can find that cheaper in Dubai". My host sister, Leila, was complemented on a blouse she was wearing, and her response was, "Oh I'm sorry, you won't find it here, I got it in Dubai". Sudan Airways, Leila's employer, makes frequent flights to Dubai. On every return trip she brings back items she purchased at the duty free shops there including lotions and candy brands which are also sold in Sudan. According to her, however, they are better quality coming from Dubai. She would also bring back extra meals from the airline catering to the house, which would be presented to guests in place of local foods. The supplier that provided the catering was Emirates Airlines, known for its luxury brand image. As I described in Chapter 6, Leila and her family also participated in the labour migration to Saudi Arabia. One way this experience had a lasting impact was on the way Leila veils; the way the veil is wrapped completely covers her hair after the Saudi fashion. Return migrants have a different understanding of Sudan, than those who have never traveled, bring back products and ideas about a better way to be, what is "modern" and what is "traditional", and have been able to access a piece of the modern pie via their experience in one of the Gulf countries.

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Coming from the Gulf

Fellah and the group of English-speaking students that I came to know best, were part of this flow of people, products and ideas into Sudan. Their stories are similar. They all claim to have better English skills because of their education and their access to the internet and other media abroad. Nada was born and grew up in Oman and moved to Sudan for university. She says that the Sudanese community in Oman is very strong but now that she's back, people have changed, and she's lost touch with many of them. She said that Sudanese people look with disdain on those who lived in the Gulf calling them *sheena* and *awiir* 'ugly' and 'silly'. In fact, Sudanese people negatively refer to young Gulf returnees as *shahada 'arabiyya* 'Arabic Diploma', an ironic phrase referring to these return migrants' better Arabic education in the Gulf and simultaneous naivety in the customs of Sudan. Lu'lu' moved to Sudan five years ago from Saudi Arabia and says the move was very difficult. She does not see herself in Sudan in the future, there is "no control over your life". Hatim, who had grown up in Qatar, had a unique personal style, one that made him distinguishable, at least from the others, in a society where standing out is discouraged. He came into my office with headphones around his neck, bigger than usual hair and beard, baggy jeans, black thick-rimmed glasses and trendy tennis shoes. One of the first things he said to me was, in this country, "there's something wrong", they do not let you think on your own; they give you advice and try to control you. "If it comes wrong they say 'hah I told you, if it comes right, they take credit'". Hatim wants to work hard, do the best he can, but is counting the days until he can return to Qatar, or elsewhere; his best friend is his music, he says. These students' comments are similar to Fellah's emailed comments on her childhood in UAE and circumstances in Sudan:

> "<about my childhood,it was full with crazzyness!and other nice things which i will never forget,the enviroment around me gave me alot of chances to do different things,different activities,because i spent my childhood in gulf (…) but my own vision sais that the enviroment in sudan doesn't give the child a chance to add more to his world, thats why a child in sudan has a tiny imagination,but from the other hand he might be a smart one,because he may be not able to have whatever he want, so this gives him a chance to think of creating thing from nothing (...) but in gulf children can find whatever they want>"

These students claim similar backgrounds, and similar attitudes towards English and Sudan. While they varied in location, they share the experience of moving to Sudan as young adults, of feeling socially excluded, and at the same time, feeling that Sudan was "old-fashioned", that society was too oppressive. What is interesting is that these students and other Sudanese seem to be in rivalry for authenticity. The Gulf migrants have a claim to a greater education and access to Islamic practice, which is deemed closer to an "authentic" one. On the other

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hand, many Sudanese people claim that Sudanese Islam, with its gender segregation and prohibition on alcohol among other things, witnesses Islamic practices which are more conservative than in the Gulf. As discussed above, places like Dubai or Cairo are very Westernized, with media, shopping, even bars with alcohol and McDonald's. As Fabos (2008) observed for Sudanese in the diaspora, some Sudanese seize on these stereotypes to reinforce their own religious piety, their Muslim and Arab propriety, untainted by Western contact as well as, perhaps, their own feelings of inferiority. For women, this may involve more modest dressing styles, and whitening of the skin. By emphasizing a Gulf-Arab identity over a Sudanese one, and claiming membership to the larger modern community of Arabs and Muslims, Gulf migrants are able to elevate themselves socially. However, in the Sudanese context, some of these same behaviours[1] are perceived as alien, and the simultaneous cause for their social estrangement.

Therefore, this group of students is caught between two worlds, neither of which offers them a complete sense of belonging. Their visions of the future involve living outside of Sudan, maybe in Europe or the Gulf, and English skills are one of the main avenues to achieving this goal. This is unlike the earlier generation of students of the University of Khartoum (formerly Gordon College), who saw English as a tool for accessing resources, lifestyles and ideas that would modernize their nation. The main sources and motivations for learning the English language have transferred from the British colonists to the Gulf states, bypassing the state of Sudan as the locus of "modernity". The notions of "modernity" that English represents, particularly with the decline of public services such as education, in turn, have moved outside the sphere of the state, and are in large part now situated in the Gulf. These students also distinguish themselves from their peers at the University through their personal style. Lu'lu' and Fellah girls tended toward more conservative Islamic veiling styles, while Hatim, stood out with a hip-hop fashion characteristic of Western youth. More important for the purposes of this chapter is how they are distinguished by a unique texting style, frequently using English, as well as a mixed-code of English scripts with Arabic commonly referred to as "Chat language", a distinct register which identifies them with globalized trendy youth styles being used across many cultures in ICT contexts, and which I will describe in the next section.

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1 The use of skin whitening creams is increasingly common, however.

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Globalization of English and computer-mediated communication (CMC)

In the past sections I have discussed how both the mobile phone and the English language are technologies of communication and symbols of modernity. It is certainly no surprise therefore that English, as the most important global language, is used indexically for settings and contexts that are technical, scientific or electronic. Even in Sudan, English instruction continued at the university level in the sciences until the latter phase of ARABIZATION in the 1990s. In terms of cultural flows, more films, books and information come from the English-speaking world to the rest of the world than in the opposite direction. English is increasingly the common medium even in interactions between non-English speaking people. In media especially, English discourse is dominant, and based on the need to refer to objects and concepts originating in Europe or the US. However, beyond borrowing specific culture-related vocabulary, English is creeping into everyday discourse, through expressions and idioms or even greetings. It is especially prevalent on the internet, being used as the common language of blogs, instant-messaging, chat rooms, generally reflecting the "Englishisation" of popular culture. Reportedly 80% of web content is in English (*BBC News* 2001). One of the effects of an English-dominated internet is a kind of computer-mediated communication (CMC), what Crystal (2001) has called, global "netspeak" which has emerged along with the internet medium. Crystal calls this a new kind of language since it is neither like speech nor like written language, but in-between the two, specific to electronic environments but based in English. As with text-message language (see Chapter 3), features of "netspeak" include a number of typographic simplifications of standard orthographies, often more phonetic adjustments such as the use of acronyms, shortenings and homophones, a short message length and lesser granularity (depth of content) and either synchronous or asynchronous response depending on the medium. Instant messaging and chat are synchronous (requiring an immediate response) while texting and email are asynchronous.

As Danet & Herring (2003) observe for the internet, *multilingual* electronic environments are until now mostly ignored, but raise interesting complications including the "distinctive features of email or chat in languages with specific font-related requirements, to code-switching in bilingual or multilingual communication, to the effects of the English language and global "netspeak" (Crystal 2001) on CMC in local languages". Since Americans planned the internet, it was initially only designed for English. ASCII,[2] the acronym for American Standard

2 "Wikipedia." Retrieved July 2008, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ASCIII.

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Code for Information Interchange, was developed in the 1960's for encoding text characters based on English. It contains 128 seven-bit codes allowing 94 printable characters for use in computers and communications. It is now incorporated into Unicode which most electronics now use, allowing a much wider range of characters. Even though other language fonts are now available with Unicode, ASCII is still the dominant script. Indeed new research on chat rooms, email and instant messaging shows local varieties of "netspeak": English mixed with local languages, or ASCII script used for languages formally written in other scripts, such as Greek (Androutsopoulos 2006a), Chinese (Lam 2004) and Arabic (Warschauer *et al*. 2002; Palfreyman & al Khalil 2003).

Such informal conventions have certainly evolved to accommodate for ICTs that are not equipped with particular character sets. However, the decision to write a spoken language down and the use of a certain writing system is also ideologically charged. Tunisia gives us a case of how French, the former colonial language remains the symbol of access to the wider world. While everyone knows the Arabic script, literacy in French is very much related with people's sense of being *bien-éduqué* and even Tunisian Arabic is written in ASCII but with a French orthography. Similarly, in Senegal, even though a standard orthography has been established for Wolof, people use a French orthography instead. By intertwining literacy in a European language in the writing of a national language, the use of Wolof is very much correlated with an urban and modern Senegalese identity (Lexander 2007). Thurlow (2003) too identified how accent stylizations were very important in the UK reporting a type of 'regiolectal' language play such as writing dialectical pronunciations (e.g. *novern* for 'northern'). These students identify themselves as belonging to particular regions in the UK, displaying in-group self-deprecating humor due to the highly stigmatized nature of dialects. The marked use of the dialectal form shows that the person has knowledge of the standard and dialectical variety which aligns himself both with the speakers of the dialect and with those on the outside, by conscientiously making fun of it. Palfreyman & al Khalil (2003) analyzed digraphia, the use of two writing systems (Arabic script and ASCII script), with differentiated social functions in instant messaging. The ASCII script is used among university students for writing in local dialectical Gulf Arabic, drawing on the globalized tool of English to create what they termed an in-group "teen" language. Using it meant identifying with a higher education and prestige even though it is used for establishing intimacy as it is used for writing the oral language. Meanwhile, standard Arabic script is used more often in greetings and closings and religious expressions. These examples show that the CMC is a site for the display of identity. This and the urge to communicate combine in a speaker's choice of writing style, showing how even limited fonts and formats can be co-opted for

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creative purposes. The choice of language, script and orthography, therefore, is contingent on several factors: the sound-symbol constraints of a script, accepted norms of literacy and the conscientious rejection of these norms in the presentation of identity.

In most text messaging in the current research, the Arabic script was used. As I discussed in Chapter 3, Arabic dialects are not written formally due to the widespread prejudice that these spoken forms are corruptions of the "pure" Classical Arabic of the Qur'an; nonetheless they dominate in text-messaging, except in poetry writing where *fuSHa* and EKA are common. Castells *et al.* (2007) suggest that most texting styles originate from the internet and are carried over into mobile phones. This was true of the young women in Palfreyman & al Khalil's study on instant messaging, and where about half of the students used this same ASCII Arabic script in mobile texting. In the current research, the students who use Chat language claimed to have learned this style from Arabic internet websites, such as *Wanasa* "Chat". This suggests that only a small portion of students engage in chatting on the internet, or at least on websites where ASCII is used. There did seem to be a high correlation between a student's ability in English and how much he or she uses the internet. For the few students who've developed skills in Chat language, the SMS is used as a medium for contesting the traditional alignment of the prestige language with new technology, whereas CA was uniquely linked with writing in the past. Furthermore, it is the complex interrelationship between SCA and English which symbolizes this new kind of "modern" identity. English as the formal colonial and now global language, is a resource which is used by some to establish a more intimate writing style, ironically closer to home than "pure" Arabic.

The use of ASCII for spoken colloquial Arabic is probably correlated with several factors including the prevalence of English in globalizing mediums such as the internet, the desire to create a speech-like writing and also to perform skills and display identity. In fact, now that Unicode-based Arabic character sets are widely available in phones, the English-based ASCII is still widely used and a context where using English words is much more prevalent (up to 50%) as Warschauer *et al*. (2002) have shown for the use of English, Modern Standard Arabic and Egyptian Arabic in electronic communication. Therefore script choice is not necessarily a technical constraint so much as a stylistic or ideological choice. According to Barendregt (2006: 56), chatting with texts is "not just exchanging chitchat, but chitchatting in a very modern way, both through the technology and the language that are used".

For Fellah and the others coming from the Gulf, the use of ASCII for colloquial Sudanese is prevalent in the messages, in addition to a few others who did not share this experience, but nonetheless seem to have taken advantage of the

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few internet cafes near the University of Khartoum, and learned this writing style independently. In the next section I will briefly analyze the use of English language and script in their texting styles, which is likely to vary across individuals. As some point out, there is a high degree of variability since standardized conventions do not exist and future research should address the "social diversity" of CMC rather than looking for homogeneity (Androutsopoulos 2006b). Androutsopoulos and others (Thurlow 2003) warn against the claims of early research that the revolutionary "netspeak" is consuming electronic communication the world over. Studies of "textese" in mobile phones have made similar far-reaching claims calling it an impenetrable youth code: "messages often bear more resemblance to code than to standard language," (Kasesniemi & Rautiainen 2002: 183). However, studies such as that of Thurlow (2003) show that fewer non-standard writing conventions are used (about 18% of the message) than was predicted. As Androutsopoulos (2003) points out with respect to a genre of music discourse and extensive borrowing and codeswitching based on German and a sub-culture of English, "Englishisation is a highly differentiated process, in which sociolinguistic factors such as target groups, genres, and varieties or registers of English all play a role" such that it needs to be studied in its local environment. Using English extensively is motivated not only by the need to refer to things in English, but by an identification with some cultural aspect, in his case "music youth cultures".

As I argue below, texting in Chat language as well as code-switching and mixing in English are very much correlated with the Sudanese students' need to identify with certain of their network with whom they share an interest or experience oriented toward a transnational context and a modern identity, unhampered by the social restrictions and difficult life conditions of Sudan, as they see it.

How global and local mingle in Sudanese – English texting

In this section, I will present three types of data on the use of English language and scripts in discursive texting. First, I will introduce the ASCII-based Colloquial Sudanese Chat language as one of the "codes" the students use. Then, I draw on the concepts introduced in Chapter 3, code-switching, code-mixing, footing and positioning in order to discuss how the varieties of language (English, Arabic) and scripts (ASCII and Arabic) are used in the social construction of identity. Then I will show how Chat language and other varieties of English are used by Fellah, Lu'Lu' and Hatim which identify these students with specific sub-cultural styles.

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'Chat language', al-logha chat

The following messages were exchanged between Samia and a girlfriend of hers at the University of Khartoum. Samia has never left Sudan but was able to learn Chat language through the internet in order to keep in touch with friends locally. It is the most important means of communicating with her boyfriend, followed by texting, then by in-person meetings, which are limited to encounters at the University. One of her text-messages read: *aftah messenger…* 'Open Messenger' referring to Microsoft Messenger, a popular IM tool, showing how the mediums are interrelated for her. Her text messages are written in both Arabic and Chat, depending on whom she's interacting with. In the exchange below, Samia and her friend employ the characters available using the ASCII script, but they are writing in Sudanese Colloquial Arabic. Note the use of a number of symbols beyond the letters of the English alphabet including the dollar sign, and the numbers 3, 7, 9 and '7.

(7.2) salam mo$tagen ala'7bar $no, 3mlty $no 9y modo3 a7med?
salaam mushtagiin al-akhbaar shinu, 'amalti shinu fi mawdu' aHmed?
'Hello I miss you what's your news, what did you do about Ahmed?'

(7.3) salam bay alakter, ana tamam, A7med atasl ly ames bs ana ma rdyt 3lyho, 3$an konta zhjana
salaam bil aktar, ana tamaam, aHmed itasal leey amis bas ana ma reddeet 'aleehu, 'ashaan kunta zahjaana
'Hello, me too, I'm fine, Ahmed called me yesterday but I didn't answer him because I was fed up'

Written languages involve a set of conventions pairing sounds with symbols. The most transparent system is the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), which pairs one sound with one symbol. However, most language scripts involve complex correspondences where one symbol (e.g. <c>[3] may represent multiple sounds (s) 'cent', (k) 'cat') or multiple symbols represent one sound (e.g. 'root' and 'rude' both have the same vowel (u)). Languages that share the Latin script differ in the ways these are paired; e.g. (u) in French is written <ou> as in 'Louvre'. They also differ in the total number of symbols: English has one fewer symbol than Spanish. Arabic like English has an alphabetic script in that it is based on a correspondence between letters and sounds. It has more symbols (28 consonants and long vowels and 14 other diacritics) than English (26 consonants and vowels) making it closer to a phonetic system than English in complete form.

In transliteration from Arabic into ASCII, different strategies are used. Some speakers are familiar with some form of standardized transliteration of Arabic

[3] To remind the reader, brackets ( ) are used for IPA symbols, while scripts are written in between < > and translations in single quotes ' ' .

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into the Latin alphabet, CLA (Common Latinized Arabic), such as is used in academic writing but also Latinized street signs and ads. In this convention sounds that do not exist in the Latin script, *'ayn* (ʕ) which is represented by the Arabic symbol <ع>, for example, are written with other Latin symbols such as an apostrophe < ' > (e.g. <'Arabiyya>) which I have used in this thesis (see Appendix i. In Palfreyman and al Khalil's (2003) study of the use of ASCII for writing Colloquial Arabic in UAE, they found that both phonological and orthographic associations and literacy in CLA motivated the selection of characters. The examples above share many of the same conventions. For example, Arabic has the sound (h), which is like the English sound 'he' but it also has a pharyngeal or "emphatic" sound (ħ), written as <ح> in Arabic, and which has no ASCII equivalent. In my transliteration I have written this sound as <H> based on its *phonological* similarity. However the English-using students in this study write this same sound as a <7> based on its orthographic *resemblance* to the missing Arabic letter <ح>. For example, the name Ahmed, which I have transcribed as <aHmed>, they write <a7med>. The same principle is applied for the other numbers: <9> resembles the Arabic (f) sound <ف>, the <3> resembles the symbol <ع>, etc. In the following table, I show a few correspondences specific to these examples:[4]

Phonetic symbol	Example	CLA	Chat language
( )	no English equivalent	'	3
(ħ)	'aha!'	H	7
(f)	'feet'	f	9
(x)	'Khartoum', 'Bach'	kh	'7 or 5
( )	no English equivalent	S	9
(sh)	'should'	sh	$

The writing of vowels is more complicated. Arabic only has three vowels (a), (i), (u) but it distinguishes long versions of each (a:) (i:) (u:). Outside of classical literary and religious texts, only the long vowels and consonants are written, and the short vowels are omitted. In a literal ACSII transliteration, if only long vowels are written, words without long vowels would be written with only consonants, e.g. the plural word 'books' would be written <ktb> even though it is phonetically (kutub). In both the informal ASCII and CLA types of transcription, the spoken form is more likely transcribed than the original written form being transliterated symbol for symbol. In practice, there is some variation; sometimes short vowels are omitted, sometimes they are left in, in which case they are not contrastive with the long vowels which are always transcribed. The word 'book'

4 See Appendix 1 for the complete list of transcription conventions that I adopted for this thesis.

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(kita:b), with one long vowel, could alternately be written <ktab> or <kitab> or <kitaab>, where the second version does not preserve the contrast in length.

In the small bit of data above (7.2-7.3), the following correspondences appear:

Phonetic	CLA	Chat language
(a)	a	a or 0
(a:)	aa	a
(i)	i	y or 0 or e
(i:)	ii	e
(u)	u	o
(ei)	ee	y
(ai)	ai	ay

There is little consistency, as can be seen, in the writing of vowels, except that the long vowels are not distinguished, but this too varies in other students' writing. One student wrote the word, <3ogbalik> 'also to you', another wrote <3ogbaalak> while a third wrote <3g"baaaaalk>. One consistency is that all of them wrote the letter <g>, which is not a sound in Classical Arabic, but a specific recognition of dialectical Sudanese. In Sudanese, the CA sound (q) written in Arabic as <ق> is systematically changed to (g), but when writing SCA in Arabic script SMSs, only the letter <ق> is used. However the ASCII script comes closer to recognizing the spoken pronunciation due to the use of the English <g>. Another dialectical feature is the pronunciation of the vowel (u) 'waw' sound which is often pronounced as an (o) in Sudanese. Arabic script has no (o) equivalent, and the students make good use of the ASCII <o> symbol to represent their own dialect. Chat language, therefore, is a non-standardized pairing of sounds and symbols based on either known conventions such as CLA, or phonological or orthographic associations. For some, it is loosely based on a symbol-to-symbol transliteration from Arabic script, for others it is more phonetic.

Code-switching

Some of the code-switching in this data is similar to the uses of SCA and CA in previous chapters, *insertional* code-switching, where speakers insert single words or phrases from CA into the main language, SCA. Here English is frequently inserted into SCA either because of lexical necessity or as a stylistic choice, although English represents a different world of connotations than does CA, and an additional complication, as it may come in as a different script. I will present the various options. In the case of borrowed English words, such as 'hard' that

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have been incorporated grammatically into Arabic, they are mostly written in Arabic. Here the script is maintained:

(7.4) هارد ليك .ماعجبنا ليكم
haard leek ma ‘ajibna leekum
‘Hard on you, we’re not happy for you’ 2ent

In addition to established borrowings, it is common to find the insertion of new borrowed words for items of technology such as the following.

(7.5) أنا جاى على الجامعه داير الفلاش بتاعك ضرورى جدا جدا
ana jaay ‘ala jaam‘a daayir al-**flaash** bitaa‘ak Daruuri jiddaan jiddaan
‘I’m coming to university, I want your flash really really necessary’

Some foreign words are not lexically incorporated and they are sometimes written in Arabic, in keeping with the rest of the message such as ‘Hi’ and ‘Pizza Hut’, in bold, below. Here the Arabic script is maintained because it is the main language. This message was written to Nada from her sister in Oman, referencing the familiar American fast food chain Pizza Hut.

(7.6) هاى ندوش أحنا حسع ماشين بيتزا هوت حناكليكم معنا
Hai naduush iHna Hassi‘ maashiin biizza huut Ha naakkilkum ma‘ana
‘Hi Nadush now we are going to Pizza Hut, we will feed you’

In a contrasting example, English, not Arabic is the main language, with a code-switch into Arabized Chat language; ‘with the headset’ *fil sama‘a,* corresponds with a switch into SCA. Again, the script of the main language is maintained.

(7.7) Sorry loola I got a prob **fil sama3a** u cant hear me. Am at uni n u?
‘Sorry lola I got a problem **with the headset** and you can’t hear me. I’m at university and you?’

Rarely, script-switching occurs inside the message probably due to the difficulty of changing fonts in the phone, which can be time-consuming. In the following exchange between Talal and Rashid, the use of the Latin letters for <Catar> is necessary for its interpretation, as it stands for Caterpillar, the brand name for a kind of tractor or machine used in mining, with thick treaded tires used for rolling through rough terrain. In Rashid’s response, he uses Arabic for the same word, likely because it’s faster than manually switching fonts inside the phone, and the reference of *Catar* then is clear. Talel works for a petrol mining

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company, and regularly uses Caterpillers. Here he is referring to a woman, the two of them have nicknamed Caterpiller, in an inside joke.

(7.8) Catar أنا وحلان رسل لى يجرنى
ana waHlaan rassil leey yajurani **catar**
'I'm stuck in the mud, send me a **Cater(pillar)** to pull me out'

(7.9) الكتر في الفيلد
al-**katar** fil fiild
'The Cater is in the field'

In the examples above, code-switching seems motivated by lexical need, the necessity of referring to an item or brand name which has no referential equivalent in Arabic. In this rare last example, script-mixing corresponds with code-switching such that each English word is written in the ASCII and Arabic in Arabic. Clearly, this is motivated by stylistic effect as this is a kind of poem, which shows that the sender is an Arabic speaker but can manipulate English as well. The English nouns are incorporated into the syntax of Arabic, but not into the morphology.

(7.10) PERSON يملكه أغلى FACE نسكبها على أجمل KISSES مع سله LOVE نرسل باقه
narassil bagha LOVE ma' sellat KISSES naskubuha 'ala ajmal FACE yamliku aghla PERSON
'We send a pot of love with a basket of kisses, we spill it on the most beautiful face of a queenly precious person'

As I have suggested above, English is the language of pop culture and modern things, while at the same time is more closely connected to dialectical Arabic, and media flows from other Arab countries. This example shows the switch from English language and script to Egyptian dialect and Arabic script.

(7.11) /I MISS YOU/وحشتنى
/I MISS YOU/waHashtini
'/I MISS YOU/(Do) you miss me(?)'

The Egyptian dialect in particular is especially influential as most of the Arabic-speaking world's popular music and film is produced in Egypt. In fact, all Arab media audiences are familiar with Egyptian Arabic, which serves as a kind of pop culture lingua franca.

In addition to lexical borrowing and the stylized use of scripts, code-switching accomplishes interactional intimacy. In the following exchange between Fellah and Khattab, her cousin, we see SCA expressions *wa 'ogbaalak* 'and the same to

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you' framing the discourse. The phrase is a wish to the recipient that he too will get married, and in his response, he returns the wish.

(7.12) Hi "hakoona matata" how r u? Leena invites you for her sister's widding, which will be after tomorrow at (saalat al mu3allim) w 3ogbaalak ;-)

(7.13) Say congratulation 2 her I won't be there. w 3g"baaaaalk

The use of these expressions at the end of the text is an example of footing, showing the interactional alignment of the exchange, signaled by the shift into Chat language and SCA. This expression intimately unites these two texters as Sudanese, as well as marking them as being competent in Chat language and fluent English as well. Fellah calls Khattab "Hakoona Matata" because he admires the character with that name in the film The Lion King. Referencing a popular Disney character also shows a strategic positioning of identity, marking an affiliation to popular American media.

The last example of code-switching comes from Samia and Khaled a boy that she is interested in, about their new relationship. Here, the switch into English from ASCII Arabic signals a declaration of affection from Samia in her reply.

(7.14) masa al 5air bokra an ma 7agdar ajy aljam3a wa aln9ciat alyla kai9?
misa' al-khair bokra an ma Hagdar aji al-jaam'a wa al-nafsiyaat al-leela kef?
'Good evening tomorrow I won't be able to come to the university and how are you feeling today?'

(7.15) msaa alnoor bkra ma jaya ok 7asl 7'air alnafsyat allila 100% **and what about U I hope that U like me 100% also.**

misa' al-nuur bokra ma jaaya ok Hasal khair al-nafsiyaat 100%...
'Good evening tomorrow I'm not coming, it's for the best, feeling 100% today and what about you I hope you like me 100% also'

The transition from Chat language into English accompanies an interactional shift, from casual greetings to a fairly intimate question. It seems that the use of English distances Samia slightly from the role of "author" (see Chapter 5) and creates a more neutral tone. Arabic does not share with English an equivalent for the romantic sense of 'like', the options being love *Hobb* which may be too strong or *mu'aajiba* 'liking/pleased' which may be too soft. It may be that English provides an option for a neutral but intimate modality.

Lu'lu' and her immediate network share a type of Chat language which is better understood as a type of code-mixing, the integration of two codes: both Chat language and English words and idiomatic expressions, rather than isolated instances such as the examples above, but regularly used within a certain social group. In fact, I was surprised in looking at Lu'lu''s data because all of her

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messages were written in this variety, including all the received messages, and she confirmed later that, indeed, she only writes in this code. Here are several examples; these messages are unrelated. (7.16) was written to <Bñboõna>, a contact nickname meaning "lollipop" for her sister Wamda. (7.17) was written to her boyfriend nicknamed <My $LM> 'My Sweet Love Mohammed', the last ones, by other friends to Lu'lu'. The English is in bold:

(7.16) ya slaaaaam **I'm sooooo happy** – goli li 7sn dgsta tani ma fi wamda **once** enta 7'$t el beat tani $umaha gd7a…

ya salaaaam I'm sooooo happy – guuli lee Hasan dagasta taani ma fi wamda once khushta al-beet taani shumaha gadHa

'Oh my I'm sooooo happy – Tell Hasan he's in big trouble, also no more Wamda, once you enter the house again, you'll find nothing'

(7.17) gool bsmellahi o try 2 foucs o en$2allah **u'll know everything cuz u did ur best** … ylla ya ba$a **good luck** …

guul bismillahi or try to focus or inshall'allah you'll know everything cuz you did your best… yalla ya basha good luck…
'Say in the name of God and try to focus and godwilling you'll know everything because you did your best, all right Pasha, good luck'

(7.18) Sweet lola **come 2** m3mar **plz then miscall me cool**?
'Sweet lola come to m'amar please then give me a missed call cool?'

(7.19) Sweet lola goli li mama eHna w9lna b7ri **o by the way** nsito el pndol!
Sweet lola guuli lee mama iHna waSalna baHri oh by the way nisiit al-panadol
'Sweet lola, tell Mama we arrived to Bahri oh by the way I forgot the Panadol!'

(7.20) **No I'm not** wllahi **but I was busy** ☹ oma son ma mura3i
'No I'm not by God but I was busy ☹ (untranslated) buttermilk'

This mixed-code variety includes single items 'once' as well as phrases 'o by the way' which are not integrated into the morphology of Arabic but are integrated into the syntax such that the an equivalent Arabic phrase or word would occupy the same position in the sentence. The switches correspond with changes in a phrase or clause, such as the adverbials, 'once', 'by the way' and <wllahi> 'by God', but otherwise seems unpredictable. Many of the English phrases are idiomatic ready-made fixed expressions, which fit into the right situation such as greetings, exclamations or apologies. Rather than being localized or re-contextualized in meaning, they are markers of an in-group style across all messages (Androutsopoulos 2003).

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English varieties

Some uses of English can be considered "language crossing" (Rampton 1998) where specific elements of a language variety, are used by someone who does not normally speak that variety, in order to identify with a specific ethnic or social group. Returning to Fellah's message in (7), above, we saw that she employed a sub-standard variety of English with her use of the phrase, *Hi girl*, the homophones *r u* 'are you' and *4 u* 'for you', and the shortening *coze* 'because'. Lu'lu', too, uses *2* 'to', *wid* 'with' and 'cool', knowing how to properly shorten English words, e.g. *cuz* 'because', *uni* 'university', *prob* 'problem'. These uses of English draw from a distinctive type of slang, with recognizable aspects of "netspeak", as well as American teenage slang, both non-standard varieties of English.

Hatim also incorporates a variety of English known as African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) or "hip-hop slang", into his text messages and into the names of his contact list. One of his friends who lives in *shajara*, a place resembling the name *shajar* 'tree', he has nicknamed DA TREE BILDER. The word *da* stands for 'the' in hip-hop slang. His mother is named MY BLACK QUEEN, a reference to his own ethnicity and his reverence for his mother. "Mother" expressions figure frequently in AAVE, both as a way to praise or insult. One of his text messages ends with a switch into English with the phrase, 'Do it or die tryin' bro'. This variety of English is very much associated with a music sub-culture, and probably this is how Hatim came into contact with it. Using it identifies him with a specific type of imported English culture, that of African Americans. Many Sudanese "Arabs" who lived in the Gulf were taken for Black Africans, a surprise to many of them (Bernal 1997). A Sudanese friend of mine, who had lived in Dubai for two years, told me that it was only in Dubai that he learned that he was Black. Hatim's identifying with Black American culture may be inspired by his experience growing up in Qatar. Interestingly, Hatim also uses a lot of religious expressions: *allah yahfazik* 'May God preserve you' and *jazaak allah* 'That God reward you' seem to grace most of his text messages. This may seem like a contradiction, but it shows how religious faith is not necessarily in opposition to pop culture modernity. The same is true of Fellah, who carefully observes Islam in her interactions and her dressing style, while at the same time projecting a trendy teenage identity.

The data presented in this section illustrate varying ways that English figures in the discursive texting of these students. Minimally, words for technology or brand names are borrowed into SCA, and most likely written in Arabic script. Stylistic play motivates the use of both Arabic and ASCII scripts, sometimes in the same message. Longer stretches of English discourse are more likely written in English, with code-switches into Sudanese Arabic written in Chat language. And, code-mixing, a specific variety of Chat mixed with English, is a marker of

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in-group style across a social group. Blommaert (1992) says that code-switching is mainly motivated by social styles, since using specific codes entails social information. The use of languages and varieties of language inevitably reference the cultures and histories of the people who speak them, and are not equally accessible to everyone. By code-switching in discourse, speakers are using a resource in order to project sub-cultural identities, where membership to the community of people who share this resource is dependant on their ability to manipulate the same language sets. They construct their relationships as competent speakers of SCA and English, and as literate users of Chat language. The use of writing systems, specifically, is motivated by a desire to create a more intimate speech-like writing in addition to issues of literacy: access to education and technology. Deciding which script and which orthography to use is also conditioned by social reasons. Typographic choices are hardly abstract sign systems, but can be socially significant markers of in-group identity. As Palfreyman & al Khalil (2003) observed in Dubai, the ASCII-based Arabic orthography *seems* closer to the spoken language than even CLA, even though both are English-based showing its in-group bias.

In the present research, the use of English, whether borrowed words, brand names, pop culture references, longer stretches of discourse, or the use of the ASC script alone in writing Sudanese Arabic, all serve to associate these students with the world outside Sudan, that most of them feel a need to connect to via their upbringing in the Gulf. Personal identity is extremely important for young people especially (Castells *et al.* 2007). This need is often manifested in aspects of style, music choice, fashion, or, as I have described above, certain local or English-derived slang or vocabularies associated with being young and technologically hip. For Lu'lu', Fellah and Hatim, English is a means for accessing specific sub-cultural identities associated with the English-speaking world, trendy teenager and hip-hop cultures, respectively. Concerning the use of ASCII, it seems that these students are essentially bypassing the norms of literacy and validating their own dialect, SCA, by writing it in the ASCII script, which to them is more personal, and a medium for intimacy. In the words of Samia concerning Chat language, "I love it just". Lu'lu' and her network's mixed-code English-Chat language variety is a salient marker of in-group identity, and a stable attribute of personal style, marking her transnational culture through her use of language. In the next section, I discuss how these uses of English not only mark individual identities but signal a group style for those who have access to it. Language choice and use in texting, for these students, not only marks them as connected, urban and modern, it allows them to assert membership to a virtual community which transcends national boundaries, and distinguishes them from their Sudanese peers. In the following discussion, I will relate these data more

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specifically to the concept of virtual community, and the kind of electronic literacy that such membership entails.

Electronic literacy and virtual community

Obtaining literacy in a language "is an important social practice through which a society constructs and reproduces its dominant beliefs, values and social relations" (Lam 2004: 44). In this thesis, I have provided many examples of text messaging, a literacy practice that reflects some influences from the tradition of Classical Arabic literacy such as the poetry-writing in Chapter 5. I've also shown that text messages are one of the few contexts for the writing of Colloquial Sudanese, showing how local oral culture is merging with written culture in this medium, a practice of non-standard literacy. However, as I showed in Chapter V, both the writing of CA and SCA are attributable to a national Sudanese culture as it is defined by both Sudanese and Arabic aspects.

The data in this chapter is less ambiguous, with particular reference to Chat language, showing that literacy may be complexly associated with both local and imported factors. As Brandt & Clinton (2002: 343) argue, local situated literacy practices cannot be privileged as the only relevant context but that literacy arrives from outside places regularly "infiltrating (…) local life". They propose the constructs of "localizing moves" and "globalizing connects" to show how literacy practices are shaped to local needs but have sources or implications far beyond the local. Globalizing connects are one of the ways the students in this research attach themselves in the world. Their use of English, in particular the use of ASCII, for Colloquial Sudanese Arabic, in the practice of writing texts, serves to facilitate a collective identity, or virtual community by way of a common language variety. As Lam (2004: 45) summarizes, based on the work of Appadurai, "(…) the construction of identity and social relations is increasingly taking place amidst the trans-border circulation of cultural and discursive materials that embed forms of belonging and subject-making beyond the nation (…) the global could be a place invested with a deep sense of personal interest and attachment".

Research has emerged about CMC and online community-formation, through the use of language conventions such as "netspeak" that are recognized by the members of that group. I have presented data that differentiates those who are literate in this type of language from those who are not. My research assistants, while capable in English, for example, could not read Chat language. Some common aspects of text-language internationally include the use of *2* 'to' and *LOL* 'laughing out loud'. Some of these common features are integrated into local use. As in many Arabic-speaking countries, in the Sudanese texts, the numbers *3, 5, 7, 7',9* have meaning as does the @ symbol as a marker of feminine gender, and *$* sign for the 'sh' sound. The referencing of names such as Pizza Hut, or the acro-

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nyms KSA 'Kingdom of Saudi Arabia' or UAE 'United Arab Emirates' draw texters into a familiar world of people and places. Code-switching from English into ASCII Arabic often accompanies leave-takings, e.g. <*yalla ya basha*> 'ok Pasha', and <*3ogbaalik*> 'the same to you'. Code-switching into English was also shown to correlate with the need for a certain more neutral affect, than the one available in Arabic. The frequent and repeated use of interactional rituals in English 'Hi', 'Hey', 'c u later', 'miss you' as well as in ASCII Arabic, e.g. *ya salaam, wllahi* etc. mark a discursive style that is like oral communication. Certain typographic repetitions occur in both English and Arabic, e.g. <mu$taga lik **$deeeed>** 'I miss you so much' and <I'm **soooooo** happy>, function in the same way, to produce an emphatic effect. Typographic play in English or ASCII Arabic shows their language as intimate and signals that the utterance is oriented toward fellow in-group recipients. These conventions are extremely informal. It is neither English nor Arabic alone that is the medium for interpersonal intimacy, but the combination of the two in Chat language. At an even more specialized level, the use of vernacular varieties of English, e.g. 'cool', 'hi girl', mark identification to a specific sub-culture. The uses of English, in borrowing, code-switching, Chat language and especially in the mixed-code variety, serve to facilitate and reinforce a collective cultural identity, as native speakers of Sudanese who have come in contact with English and with the internet. This identity is distinct from that of native speakers of English, and from their Sudanese classmates who do not share these experiences, but rather is an alternative identity which only emerged through the practice of chatting and texting with certain peers with whom they have this in common.

CMC literacy (Warschauer, in press) refers to the knowledge of standards for interpreting and writing in computer media. Knowing how to find and select letters, numbers, change scripts, use the right etiquette etc. in this format is a part of CMC literacy that comes with the device, but as I have shown, local meanings in this context will vary, e.g. using the right variety or language and being able to interpret the codified expressions. Having a mobile phone does not automatically connect people. Like the internet, it is a technology which can open worlds, provide new means of access to information, and greatly affect people's lives. In Senegal, while the most important spoken language is Wolof, all written domains are dominated by French, which has excluded much of the non-French-speaking population from the written form. Interestingly, however, writing in new ICT domains such as discussion forums, emails and SMSs has revealed an important presence of national languages (Lexander 2007). Lexander suggests that the written use of Wolof in SMSs, may be contributing to increased literacy, as had been suggested for African languages in other ICTs (Onguene Essono 2004) and consequent augmentation of the status of the language.

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However, in the present study, this type of literacy is dependant on other literacy practices, such that those who do not have regular access to the internet, were not familiar with Chat language, and therefore are not able to participate in this community of interaction. Samia's texts show that while she uses Chat language with the same people that she literally chats with, most of her other interactions, people in different age groups or social circles, are in SCA using Arabic script. Interestingly, Lu'lu''s vs. Samia's versions of Chat language showed high internal similarities within their respective social networks. Similar texting conventions were used between Lu'lu' and Fellah and among their friends, while Samia and her network used some slightly different conventions, showing that the same variety of Chat language does not exist across the student population, that this "youth code" is not standardized. Also, styles emerge from practice, along in-group lines, showing that literacies, indeed, develop from local uses. It should be cautioned that these kinds of literacy may not be sufficient or acceptable. Fellah's English was learned at a young age, in school and this is why she was able to get a high mark in my linguistics course. Later, however, she sent me an email complaining about a poor mark that she received in her English class. Her email explained why (see section "Coming from the Gulf" above). Her lack of standardized punctuation, capitals and spaces, and run-on sentences, and little coherence, were reminiscent of oral communication. Her extensive use of Chat language, therefore, may have socialized her into a world of electronic communication, but kept her from developing the standardized skills she needs to perform well at university.

Belonging in a globalized world

In the discussion above, I have somewhat enthusiastically presented a function of the mobile and of English, the intertwined capacity of these "technologies of communication" to unite people and fuse cultures. The other side of the coin, however, is that some aspects of globalization may be very lonely; as it brings people together, it inevitably moves others apart. Global economic patterns and labour migration brought thousands of families from Sudan to the Gulf and back again. The students who are the subjects of this chapter had grown up in countries where the dominant culture was not that of their families, and where they were likely treated as lower class citizens, where they were differentiated by their color from other "Arabs". But returning to Sudan, they all expressed a form of alienation, which, in turn, allowed them to create a more objective opinion about their Sudanese origins and culture as well. Most of them expressed how alone they felt in Sudanese society, that their need for individual expression was smothered by the overbearing involvement of people in their lives, the criticisms and the "lack of control". In turn, Sudanese young people view these migrants as

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less "Sudanese". The cultural estrangement these students experience is especially difficult since they are young, between the ages of 18 and 24, a time of life when individual identities take shape, while at the same time the range of choices and options for how to make and sustain relationships or create affiliations is widened. The mobile phone has become instrumental in these processes.

As was discussed in the Introduction, possible trends of mobile phone use for young people are its causing an increase in individualism (over collectivism) and its ability to connect people in communities across geographic distance. These changes are an outcome of the increased autonomous connectivity possible, where individuals have more control over their communications than "traditional" social structures permit. The new means of information transfer provide an alternative to older communication hierarchies allowing young people to communicate more often and even at great distance. Therefore the increased access to translocal or even transglobal communication flows forges a "virtual community", where individuals willingly assert their identity as members of new kinds of collectivities, breaking free of local social structures.

Critics of these perspectives, argue that the mobile, while an "icon of globalization, worldwide communication and borderless connections" (Hahn & Kibora 2008), is perhaps more an icon than an actual means of globalization. It may be only relevant for the "local imaginary" while it is, in fact, adapted to "local culture and solidarity". Hahn & Kibora cite Slater & Kwami's (2005) study of the Ghanaian use of mobiles, which suggests that mobile telephones are used for calling immediate relations and keeping in touch locally, therefore, "connect(ing) less to the world than the discourse on globalization suggests". Horst & Miller (2006) and Thurlow (2003) came to similar conclusions in Jamaica and in the UK, respectively, that rather than contributing to an increasingly individualized society, mobiles were used to further existing friendships and relations. "Although mobiles are considered to be devices or at least symbols of global communication, they are used more often than not as means to strengthen local embedding" (Hahn & Kibora 2008). Furthermore, they suggest that the mobile phone as a consumer good, and a fashion item, is used in differentiated ways as a means for expressing social competence: "it is not so much the technology as such that explains the everyday importance, but the usages and the contextualization to which users put the mobile phone that is crucial".

It is the symbolic uses have been the focus of this chapter. But the symbolic uses cannot be separated from the phone's technological functions. In this chapter, I have addressed localized ways of engaging with technology, in contrast to an approach which hypothesizes the automatic transfer of technological capacities, and I have dealt with this through the idiom of "modernity", a theoretical construct that does not stand in opposition to "tradition" but recognizes the host

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of variations that come out of "modernity's attractions and discontents" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1993). I argue that common acts of identifying with modernity actually create the conditions for increased connectivity – that is – globalization. The mobile permits the maintenance of social relations in existing "traditional" ways, but what is different is not who is interacting, but how and why. That the phone creates the technological conditions for a virtual community is not the whole picture. Relationships are maintained through the mobile as they might be through another medium, but it is not just about connecting. In this data, the prevalent use of English as well as a mixed code of English and Arabic among these students illustrates an important function of the phone's capacity: to facilitate the maintenance of a "virtual community", in which distinct linguistic codes are used, virtually creating a "modern" identity, which is in part represented in the real world as well, through dressing styles. Relationships are equally expressed or even *defined* through the phone's capacity for informal and discursive texting rather than simply "maintained". As Castells *et al.* (2007: 144) have observed for young people "the consolidation of peer groups around shared values and codes of meaning for the members of the group leads to the emergence of collective identity.

The presence of English borrowed words, code-switching or the ASCII-based Chat language are important identifying features of the way these young people are connecting in new non-localized ways, asserting their belonging and shared identity, uniting them through texting styles. In internet chat rooms, it is the common knowledge of Chat language which allows for interaction. In texting, it is the symbolic functions, acts of "being modern" (Spitulnik 2002a), which enable the phone to function as a means for the students to connect in the world in new ways, and be members of virtual communities. Being neither entirely accepted in the Gulf countries, nor in their native Sudanese culture, they exist between the two, a hybrid identity which takes comfort in, among other things, texting styles. In this case, the use of English scripts and language among migrant and local Sudanese youth create a kind of transnational identity, one which unites people based on their performed use of English, their way of "being modern" and being connected, displacing these interactions outside of Sudan, while at the same time being based in local concerns: the local prestige value of English and the need to differentiate oneself from peers who do not share these connections with the "modern" globalized world.

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8

Conclusion

(8) ramdan krim

ramaDHaan kariim

'Generous Ramadan'

It is now six months since I have returned from Sudan and the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, when Muslims around the world fast during the daylight hours. It is a custom which unites people in practice at a global level, although its exact dates are determined by moon-examining mullahs or religious committees at the national level while exact prayer and break-fast times are coordinated at the community level up to 'as far as the eye can see from the edge of town'. Therefore, Muslims in the diaspora belong, at least, to communities of Muslims in the geographic sense, as well as the global *umma*, in the imaginative sense, in this way. I learned of the first day of Ramadan in the Netherlands, not through local authorities in the Netherlands, since I don't know who that is, but through the Moroccan merchants at the farmer's market, showing how my own sense of orientation to the Arab-Muslim world is transnational, not locally based.

In confirmation of this, my mobile phone, along with my Facebook page since the start of Ramadan, has been echoing the above text message greeting. Some, true to their skills, write me emails as well, in English, carrying the same wishes. I am absent from Sudan, but present in the minds of people as they are in mine. Through choice, I participate in such a "community of practice", sending and receiving holiday greetings, I share a sense of belonging both to a place, Sudan, but also the larger Muslim community. While I hear church bells in the distance, rather than the Imam's call to prayer, I am nonetheless exposed to the echoed public presence of Islam through several interpersonal interactions. My identity as an English speaking, non-Arabic person is targeted in the above text message,

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written in Sudanese Arabic in the Latin Alphabet. I also received a similar greeting from Tunisia, but written in Tunisian dialect, the Latin alphabet but a French orthography: *ramadan mabrouk*! Such are the globalizing effects of the mobile phone for me. These interactions are clearly an extension of real-life relationships, although these relationships are more than just interpersonal. That the message is repeated to me across people who do not know each other emphasizes their lateral function, and the sense of larger belonging to which I am invited.

As I set out in the Introduction, I was interested in how the mobile phone, as an electronic form of "small" or interpersonal media, functions in the creation of communities, or collectivities of people with shared identities, ideologies and behaviours. I was curious as to how language and interactional uses of the mobile phone may mark a departure from old ways of communicating, allowing for the creation of alternative social spaces than those that are designated by the socio-political and cultural mainstream. I have presented several chapters in which I have attempted to answer these questions. In this conclusion, I address how this data in sum speaks with respect to my question, and the claims of earlier research. Does it support the modernist ideas about globalization – that the mobile phone is allowing for open access to information, empowering and connecting people to global circuits? Or, is the phone wholly immersed in local existing relations and interactions? Is it creating a society of individualized persons, or can this be understood as new forms of virtual connectivity? As the stories and data in the various chapters have illustrated, such processes are indeed occurring in some ways while not others, as well as in ways that differ from one another in different contexts and relationships. Some of the data support the conclusions of earlier research, some point to different trends, thus the mobile phone is functioning in ways that are much more ambiguous and complex. Several questions can be asked which hopefully clarify some of these ambiguities and complexities in the data.

First of all, concerning communication and its central role in this thesis, *what is the role of language in how are people talking or connecting via the mobile phone?* The act of connecting itself via the mobile phone is only part of the picture. Differently from most research on mobile phones, this thesis has looked closely at the linguistic content of phone interactions, namely text-messaging. It is thought here that the discursive functions of text-messaging would contribute to a sense of "community" belonging. I have additionally used several kinds of data to illustrate how people connect. The discursive and linguistic features of text messages came out in Chapter 3, as a way for people to 'keep in touch' and to manipulate diglossic switching between Sudanese and Classical Arabic. In Chapter 5, linguistic data was the main source of data used to argue for a certain community based in the discursive history of poetic language. This chapter along

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with Chapter 6 both showed the text message as a site for the expression of personalized and affective language. In Chapter 7, a special discursive texting style was described in relation to a certain social group. In supplement, I used Discursive data, that is, Discourse in the larger sense, which reflects larger bodies of thought and ways of thinking associated with power structures or historical processes. While the discursive material in part makes up the larger Discourse, these Discourses can also help to situate the details of interaction. Such is the way I used both types of material, especially in Chapter 4, where Discourses on Nuba people are for some reflected or extended through mobile phone use and in Chapter 6, where Islamic Discourse on the way women should interact, is similarly reflected, furthered or even contested in text-messaging or long phone calls.

Second, Who speaks? Is participation in these discourses and Discourses open to everyone? Is it an equalizing medium open to all, i.e. a "public sphere" of interaction? Here, we see some differentiations. Most anyone with literacy skills can use text-messaging and the educated students at the University of Khartoum are certainly heavy users of this medium. For most, the use of fuSHa and the writing of poetry reflect this, although not without error. Nuba students participate in text-messaging but under the conditions of everyone else, that is, writing in Sudanese and CA. They do not contest this medium by differentiating themselves linguistically in this way. In fact, poetry writing is likely rooted in their perceived marginality, a means for integration and even recreation of an Arab-Islamic "tradition". Men and women appear to be equally aggressive consumers and producers of text-message poetry. Women, however, are formally discouraged in using the phone for relations that go beyond the publicly acceptable norms of 'keeping in touch' or making arrangements. Nonetheless, they use it for such purposes and many manage it discreetly, showing how this technology can serve to subvert Discursive norms on gender and marriage. A subset of students who have achieved literacy in Chat language can participate in an alternative public sphere, one that involves the transnational use of a hybrid Sudanese Colloquial and English register. Such a skill excludes other Sudanese students who do not know this script because they do not know English or do not use the internet, or both, showing how access to one technology facilitates access to another.

And related to this: *Is the mobile phone enhancing autonomy or individuality?* We see in all the chapters, that the mobile phone enhances individual autonomy over interactions. This allows for greater flexibility in 'keeping in touch', for the increased opportunity for participation in poetry writing, or discreet romantic interactions, or for negotiating an ethnic, religious or transnational identity. These interactions which are not controlled by "guardians" over norms of literacy,

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norms of male-female interactions, or norms over the dominant cultural identity of Northern Sudanese. Autonomy, in Chapter 6, has a broader definition than defined above – where women, especially, have noticeably different discursive and interactional options through mobile phones. While poetic text-messaging is, for some, exploited as a way to express romantic or even sexual ideas, it is also a moderated and ambiguous way to interact. Increased autonomy comes out discursively and Discursively, as some young women draw from resources outside of text-messaging either to avoid interactions altogether or justify their interactions with men. A young woman's individuality is supported by her identity as a highly educated and proprietary Muslim; it serves as a means for her to legitimate trespassing social boundaries with the mobile phone. This leads to the next question.

What kind of space does the mobile phone create? Where is this space with respect to the generally accepted understandings of "public" and "private"? I have shown how the mobile phone allows for the extension and creation of social spaces. It is used to further the practice of 'keeping in touch'; it is used to keep extended Nuba families in contact across Sudan, bringing the absent-present; it is the site for a special kind of interaction, poetry exchange which came to life through the popular engagement possible via the phone; it is used extensively to deepen romantic relations when physical time together is discouraged; it is used to maintain and reinforce both local and transnational relations in an inclusive in-group way.

The effect of the mobile phone on social space demands for a revised understanding of public vs. private space, both effects resulting in a kind of semi-private intermediate space. It seems to enlarge private space on the one hand, and to trespass into public space on the other. The way the phone pushes the boundaries of social space comes out clearly in at least two chapters. As I have argued in Chapter 5, poetic themes and language are exposed to anonymous recipients, who draw from, copy or forward them in continuous circulation, thereby staking a claim in the public sphere. The poetic genre was previously limited to elite producers, those both more literate and who had control over mass media domains, radio and newspapers. Due to the "fuzzy" effects of the phone, electronic poetry is a popular genre, accessible to anyone with a phone. Therefore, the need to identify at an interpersonal level, and the language used to accomplish this, is made a public document. Such semi-private interactions are arguably based in the primarily oral history of this poetic genre, which is given new life through the mobile phone.

In a different but related way, the mobile phone is permitting an extension of the boundaries of private space. In Chapter 6, the prescribed rules for male-female interaction mean that women are generally excluded from the "public

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sphere" Discursively. In controlled events and in the home, gender segregation persists. In daily practice, women are out there in public space, but this is still a problem, such that women need "protective devices" to maintain respectability. The conduct people associate with mobile phones, long conversations with the opposite sex, or illicit text-messaging is generally seen as "immoral behaviour" since men are permitted to enter areas of designated private space. But women can employ metaphorical "protective devices" even through the phone, by involving the Harem, an intermediate semi-private space of collaborators, where male-female interactions are deemed acceptable.

How does open participation, and the creation or extension of social spaces facilitate a sense of belonging i.e. new kind of community? Community, as I have defined it, a collectivity based on shared sentiment and belonging, an "imagined community", seems to exist through the mobile phone both as an extension of a community grounded in physical space, and as a collectivity that takes its meaning through specific phone interactions. It is, therefore, not only tied to a common place so much as a common discursive activity, an act of identification, although arguably such activities themselves come out of other related experiences which do have physical origins.

Concerning the first point, mobile communities are indeed based in existing social networks, they extend and further relations. We saw this in Chapter 3, in that the mobile is appropriated within the Sudanese practice of 'keeping in touch' – that it mirrors real-life interactions and language, while creating some flexibility through the autonomy it affords – although this slightly clashes with the ethos of communalism in physical life. However, it is also important to consider how these interactions are redefined in the mobile context, and change the shape and purpose of communities. We saw in Chapter 5, that it would be limiting to think of poetry exchanges only as dyadic two-way interactions. High frequency exposure to this genre of language and increased autonomy over participation means that more people write, forward and receive more often, moving an occasional hobby into an important daily activity, one which most young people in Khartoum engage. This medium, therefore, is a site for the exercise of several layers of identity in negotiation: it is largely reserved for youth culture; it is designed for a Sudanese public, building on aspects of Sudanese and Arab tradition; it is a site for religious proverbs and reminders, and for intimate, flirtatious affective language as well as a hybrid kind of semi-oral literacy. Such an identity is open to all students, as few or none, that I recall, didn't use poetry at all. It is adopted even by the Nuba students who Discursively distinguished themselves from Arabs in Chapter 4, exercising a contradictory or at least flexible cultural identity.

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In Chapter 7, a different kind of community was described, that which exists somewhere in the ethers between the Arabian Gulf and Sudan, drawing from real-life aspects in both places, but expressed through the symbolic use of language which is specific to neither. Such a community is distinguishable by or perhaps even dependant on its unique literacy. It corresponds with a complex identity, based on a simultaneous experience of being a socially inferior member of a migrant group in an Arab state, and of being socially excluded, through their air of superiority, from other Sudanese young people, each side grappling with issues of Arab and Muslim propriety. Its members are united through the common meaning of a similar linguistic performance, which indexes their education and background, and separates them from the other Sudanese students.

How does such a community reflect or redefine take-for-granted notions of community based in a place or nation? And, more specifically, how might its use reflect or redefine social identities such as Sudanese, Arab or Muslim? First, a Sudanese identity cannot be separated from its colonial history and the long-standing racial divide between "Blacks" and "Arabs". "Sudanese" is being re-articulated as "Arab" in some ways but "African" in others. We see in Chapter 4, Nuba students coming to terms with being both Nuba and Sudanese within extant racial hierarchies, exhibiting both ideological resistance and practical integration, i.e. Sudanization, through the use of the mobile phone. Taking the story of Joseph Kuku, we see both Sudanization as a natural process among Nuba migrants, but a simultaneous strengthening of regional identity in social identifications and declared ideologies. Some acts of identity position students with respect to a national Sudanese identity. Thus the Nuba students, while immersed in urban Sudanese life, in part use the phone to identify with a national Sudanese community through 'keeping in touch' or poetry writing, but some as I have shown, embraced it to reflect an oppositional stance, positioning themselves as "Nuba", or even a specific tribe, through the use of in-group tribal names and framing of messages with ethnic lables, reinforcing the regional or even local in the migrant context.

As the two examples of mobile phone communities above show, Arab-Islamic culture coming from outside Sudan is an important source of orientation for young Sudanese people. This is a defining point for many acts of identity, one which continually remakes national identity through transnational elements as the students "position" themselves with respect to the Arab-Islamic ideology. In Chapter 5, we see, on the one hand, a continuation and reinforcement of existing Sudanese practices, the culture of poetry writing and exchange. On the other hand, however, the influence of the mobile phone on such interactions brings the poetry genre into another realm, an "invention of tradition", bringing Sudan into the Arab-Islamic tradition through the use of an elevated Arabic register. This

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genre may, for some, including the Nuba student Alessandro, be more accessible in the electronic medium of the text-message. This is tricky to tease apart since it characterizes Sudanization, through the adoption of a "Sudanese" custom, which is in turn inspired by ideologies of Arab cultural superiority associated with Arabization, showing that the pull of the Center is not sufficient for some, that part of being a "real" Sudanese means using *fuSHa*.

Social identity is very much influenced by experiences of migration, the conveyance of an idea often accompanies the movement of a person to a new place. Internal migrations have an important impact on urban identity. Both Joseph and Alessandro host family memories of migration from the Nuba Mountains, although for Joseph, coming from the southern Nuba Mountains, it was the effect of war which brought his family away, while for Alessandro, it was labour migration, the differential family memories of which, have an effect on the political ideologies of the two young men. This is reflected in the types of relationships they maintain, and their text-messages, their discursive and Discursive practices. Alessandro does not share Joseph's anti-Arab sentiment, showing how shared origin does not preclude the same anti-Arab ideology in spite of each of them declaring pride in being Nuba.

International migration has also had an important impact on understandings of Sudanese identity. For Leila Hamad, who spent her childhood in Saudi Arabia, this meant an Arab orientation and lifestyle, which now shapes how she dresses and behaves with respect to men. The mobile phone, in Chapter 6, then, is a carefully used instrument which reflects how Leila manages a busy interactive work and study lifestyle, as well as a discrete respectable social space to talk and interact with possible marriage partners. In Chapter 7, Fellah El Sharif, who also spent her childhood in the Gulf, uses the phone to distinguish herself from other Sudanese as "modern", educated and Sudanese which provides a feeling of belonging that neither place of ethnic origin nor early residence can provide. Through the use of English and an Arabic "Chat language" based in the Latin alphabet, which she learned in the Gulf she exhibits a transnational identity in part defined by her pride in her higher education and her being half-Egyptian, and therefore a direct claim to Arab ethnicity.

Sudanese identity has always been, and continues to be influenced by its Islamic history. Understanding a Sudanese identity is impossible without reference to earlier Sufi Islam and the new Islamic fundamentalist movement of the NIF since the 1980s. For Leila and Fellah, as mentioned above, this includes new definitions of Muslim propriety for women, which they brought back to the Sudan from the Gulf, and use to their advantage in a state controlled by Islamic Fundamentalists. However, both Leila and Fellah, in different ways, redefine individual notions of acceptable Arab-Islamic behaviour, through language use

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and social interactions permissible with the mobile phone, showing how macro-social identities are ultimately negotiable, even within a rigid Islamic social structure.

How can we account for the variation in identities and communities across individuals? How does personal agency interact with such powerful social structures and/or the structural constraints of the mobile phone itself? In all of the cases that I presented above, the best way to understand the variation of strategies in the data is to consider outcomes as a result of a joint project between individuals and the means presented to them, where people are considered agents, who construct their identities according to "the realities of the day" (Manger 2001: 58). This applies, firstly, to the technological constraints of the mobile phone: the reduced formant, limited character sets, cost of calling or sending a message, and literary as well as literacy competences. Through the creative use of languages, registers and scripts, students negotiate between the urge to communicate and the need to express their identities by manipulating these options. Second, these narrow acts of creativity concern broader social engagements. We saw in Chapter 4, that Nuba students stress or de-emphasize their Nuba-ness to different ends, in spite of a general strategy of integration. Agency comes out in Chapter 5, where people engage in poetry writing and forwarding rather than being passive audiences, yet operate from existing structures, the formulaic expressions handed them by earlier poets and the ideological pull of Arab-Islamic prestige. In Chapter 6, women perform a Muslim Discourse in order to negotiate for more private space, agentively using the structure, rather than being subsumed by it or wholly defying it. In Chapter 7, transnational migrants use the ideologies of English as their structural locus rather than the standardized Arabic language and script, exhibiting a bottom-up kind of literacy, which is not deemed acceptable outside the text message or chat room.

Therefore, through the concepts of agency and structure we can come closer to answering the question as to whether the mobile phone is involved in building new relations, in furthering social spaces or whether it is simply a tool for the extension of existing relationships. On the one hand, it is utopian to speak of the mobile phone as wholly liberating people, allowing them unprecedented freedom of movement in social space. The options available for expression via the mobile phone are limited to both technological contraints and certain overarching structures and means to identify with them as I summarized above. Interactions are still very much rooted to a place and local power structures. On the other hand, mobile community formation is more than simply having access to information via the communicative possibilities of the phone. It is more than just connecting. It is a site for the reflection or creation of alternative identities and the contestation of existing Discourses, communities in physical space and notions of be-

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longing. It is clear that phone interactions involve primarily known, local relations and exchanges are interpersonal, dyadic, but they also take on new meaning through the way they are used in the virtual realm, through the increased autonomy and space for negotiation of identity, mobile communities take shape.

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Appendix 1: Transcription conventions

There are many transliteration systems from Arabic into the Latin script. I have adopted a simplified version of the system in Ryding (2005). I use a transcription which more closely approximates the Arabic writing conventions than a close phonetic transcription since I am mostly working with written text, and do not want to impose my own oral interpretation of it. However, some texts were clearly and purposefully written in Sudanese Colloquial dialect. In this case, I try to approximate the oral expression by using the symbol which better represents the dialect, e.g. /g/ or /z/, below. I do not include dipthong transliterations. Common Arabic words and place names that appear in English texts, e.g. Qur'an, Sudan, will remain according to common English spelling convention rather than a more accurate transcription, e.g. *qur'aan* or *suudaan*, in this case, which remain in italics. All mistakes and inaccuracies are my own.

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APPENDIX I

Consonants

Latinized Arabic	International Phonetic Alphabet[1] (IPA)	Arabic Alphabet
’		ء
b	b	ب
t	t	ت
th	θ	ث
j		ج
H	ħ	ح
kh[2]	x	خ
d	d	د
dh	ð	ذ
r	r	ر
z	z	ز
s	s	س
sh		ش
S	s	ص
D	d	ض
T	T	ط
DH (/Z/ in SCA[3])	ð or z	ظ
‘		ع
gh		غ
f	f	ف
q (/g/ or /gh/ in SCA)	q or g or	ق
k	k	ك
l	l	ل
m	m	م
n	n	ن
h	h	ه
w	w	و
y	j	ي

Vowels

Latinized Alphabet		International Phonetic Alphabet		Arabic Alphabet	
Long	Short	Long	Short	Long	Short
aa	a	aa	a	ا	Not written
ii (/ee/ SCA)	i	ij	i	ي	Not written
uu (/oo/ SCA)	u	uw	u	و	Not written

1 The International Phonetic Alphabet is a universally agreed upon system of notation for sounds, widely used by linguists. (1999). Handbook of the International Phonetic Association. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

2 In Ryding (2005); this sound is represented as /x/.

3 Sudanese Colloquial Arabic. See Chapter 3 for explanation.

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Appendix 2: List of terms

AAVE	African-American vernacular English
ASCII	American standard code for information interchange
ARABIZATION	see Chapter 2
Arabization	see Chapter 2
CA	Classical Arabic
CLA	Common Latinized Arabic
CMC	Computer-mediated communication
CMD	Computer-mediated discourse
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
Code-switching	see Chapter 3
Diglossia	see Chapter 3
Diglossic-switching	see Chapter 3
discourse	see Chapter 1
Discourse	see Chapter 1
EKA	Elevated Khartoum Arabic
Footing	see Chapters 3, 5, 7
fuSHa	The Arabic term for Classical Arabic
ICT	Information and communication technologies
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet
IM	Instant messaging
ISLAMIZATION	see Chapter 2
Islamization	see Chapter 2
KA	Khartoum Arabic
NIF	National Islamic Front
Positioning	see Chapter 3
SCA	Sudanese Colloquial Arabic
SMS	Short message service
SPLA/M	Sudanese people's liberation army/movement

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"This study, considering evidence from Northern Sudan, is a welcome addition to the literature on mobile communication in Africa. It combines a wide-range of methodological approaches: collection of primary SMS data, qualitative interviews and ethnographic observation. The analysis shows convincingly and in great detail how mobile communication as a semi-private genre is part of an ecology of linguistic practices which allows for the expression of a local, urban Northern Sudanese identity and culture among young mobile phone users. A range of languages are involved in the production of mobile text genres. Most dominant are colloquial (oral) varieties of Arabic and (written) Standard Arabic, the latter also the official language of Sudan. In addition, there is substantial evidence for the global influence of English (colloquial, abbreviated as well as standard) on everyday communication practices. Although Sudanese mobile communication constitutes a space in which an African and non-Arabic Nuba identity is expressed, the non-official and marginalized languages belonging to the group of Nuba languages are only very rarely used in the texting genre. This is an important text for anyone interested in mobile communication and language – indigenous, national and global – in Africa."

Dr Ana Deumert, Associate Professor of Linguistics,
University of Cape Town, South Africa

This detailed, meticulous ethnographic study on mobile phone use among Nuba students at the University of Khartoum in Sudan, distinguishes itself from other studies by taking a focused look at the linguistic content of mobile phone interactions via text-messaging, portraying it as a site for the expression of personalized and affective language. While men and women appear to be equally aggressive consumers and producers of text-message poetry, women are formally discouraged in using the phone for relations that go beyond the publicly acceptable norms of 'keeping in touch' and making arrangements. Nonetheless, women use it for such purposes and many manage it discreetly, showing how this technology can serve to subvert discursive norms on gender and marriage. The mobile phone in Sudan enhances individual autonomy over interactions, making possible the extension and creation of social spaces. It simultaneously enlarges private space and trespasses into public space. Poetic themes and language, previously limited to elite producers – those both more literate and who had control over mass media domains, radio and newspapers – are exposed to anonymous recipients, who draw from, copy or forward them in continuous circulation, thereby staking a claim in the public sphere. Similarly, the mobile phone serves as a site for the exercise of several layers of identity in negotiation, and reflects or creates alternative identities and the contestation of existing discourses, communities in physical space and notions of belonging.

Siri Lamoureaux is a PhD researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle (Saale), Germany. She is currently carrying out fieldwork in Sudan on the impact of a language and literacy programme among Nuba Moro people resident in Khartoum. Her project is entitled "Language, communication technologies and identity politics in the Nuba Mountains".

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